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LIFE

OF

SAINT ANGELA MERICI,

OF

BRESCIA:

FOUNDRESS OF THE ORDER OF SAINT URSULA.

BY THE ABBE PARENTY,
CANON OF ARRAS, MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LA MORINIE.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORDER IN IRELAND,
CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES,
BY
JOHN GILMARY SHEA.

PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE
RT. REV. BISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA.

Philadelphia:
PETER F. CUNNINGHAM, CATHOLIC BOOKSELLER,
216 SOUTH THIRD STREET.
1858.

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PREFACE.

THE reading of the lives of the Saints has been at all times recommended by the Church. God, in fact, raised them up to bring back to him, by the spectacle of their example and miracles, the nations among which they lived. In permitting public honors to be paid to them, the Holy Ghost, who directs the Church, has wished their virtues to be thus perpetuated in the memory of men. Hence the numerous panegyrics of our Christian orators: hence, too, the immense labors undertaken by the learned of every age to elucidate and recount their wonderful works.

Some among them have shone with a brighter light, like the stars of heaven, whom the Supreme Ruler of all things had set differently in the vast expanse of the firmament. Angela Merici, whose life we write, was evidently raised up by God to serve as a light to her age, to revive faith, then almost extinct, and to found an order of virgins, till then unknown in the Church. This institute, whose origin dates from the revival of learning in Europe, has spread with astonishing success, and diffused Catholic doctrines at a time when a struggle was going on between the religious parties that divided whole kingdoms.

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The order of Ursulines, founded by Saint Angela, has fulfilled this mission with ever increasing happiness, especially in France, till the period of the unhappy Revolution in that country. Then the many monasteries that had been created in its provinces were suppressed; but scarcely was religion restored to the soil of France, when new communities arose in almost every diocese. In 1807, Pope Pius VII. canonized the Blessed Angela Merici: this was an encouragement for the Ursulines who had survived the revolution. Aided by the bishops, and even by the civil authorities, they formed new establishments for the instruction of youth. A few years sufficed to restore more than a hundred communities, now very flourishing.

A complete life of Saint Angela was needed among them, and we have undertaken this. The authors that have aided us in its composition, all bear the approbation of the ecclesiastical authority. The chief are:—Father Quarré, of the Oratory; a life inserted in the History of the Order of Saint Ursula, printed at Paris in 1576, in two volumes 4to; a short life issued at Rome in 1778, and a nearly complete life published at Fougères in 1837. We have besides consulted Alban Butler, the Journal of the illustrious nuns of the Order of Saint Ursula, and the brief of her canonization.

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LIFE
OF
SAINT ANGELA MERICI.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

Birth of Saint Angela—Her precocious love of retirement—Her austere life—Death of her parents.

ANGELA was born on the 21st of March, in the year 1474, as seems most probable, at Dezanzano, a little town in Italy, situated on Lake Garda, in Bressano, diocese of Verona, six leagues from Brescia. Her father's name was John Merici, and her mother was of the family of the Brancozis of Salo.

It is generally believed that this family was not favored with worldly wealth; yet grave authors have supposed the parents of Saint Angela to have been of noble extraction. They cultivated their patrimony; but in the republic of Venice it was not deemed derogatory to an illustrious birth to till the heritage of their fathers. The name of Merici subsisted in honor as late as the last century, in some cities of the empire.

Whatever be the fact as to this conjecture, which matters little to the merit of the illustrious Saint whose virtues we are about to recount; all authors agree that her parents were at least distinguished by their piety and enjoyed the favor of all good men. God vouchsafed to bless the union of these virtuous spouses by giving them several children, among the rest two daughters, the younger of whom received in baptism the name of Angela. Happy name, inspired by Providence, who foresaw that she was to lead an angelic life on earth.

These two sisters were brought up under the paternal roof, which was a real sanctuary of piety. When describing the care which God takes of his elect, the holy King David compares them to the eagles that the mother bears under her wings, to accustom them to take their flight, and strengthen to bear the rays of the sun; so, these two daughters of Merici received in the bosom of their family, those sound lessons which strengthen faith and are never more efficacious than in tender youth. An angel seemed ever to watch over their innocence. Angela especially displayed her virtue as soon as reason began to be developed. Grace seemed stamped in every line of her countenance; an amiable purity adorned her brow; and the innocence that lit up her eyes

led all to virtue. At the age of seven she had learned that modesty should be the inseparable quality of her sex. Her timid looks showed the candor of her soul, and her actions were directed by a reason above her age. When spoken to of God, she felt her heart inflamed and ravished with love. Her sister followed her in all exercises of piety; both animated with the same spirit, spent their time in acts of virtue; this was the subject of their ordinary conversation. The amusements of their early childhood consisted in raising little oratories, and arranging little altars. There they prayed and chanted, imitating the ceremonies of the Church. The frivolous amusements and pastimes which other children seek so eagerly, had no charm for these two amiable sisters.

Their parents remarked with inexpressible joy this precocious inclination for holy things. Astonished at such an extraordinary childhood, they felt assured that Angela especially was destined by Providence to become the instrument of some great design; but they carefully dissembled their predilection for her. Still they thought that this child required particular attention to second the views of heaven, and they omited nothing that could contribute to her spiritual progress. Such was the proof of the election

which God had made of Saint Angela. For according to the expression of the wise man, "No one knoweth the care of his infinite wisdom nor the artifices which divine love can employ to win hearts."

Often amid the family they conversed on the greatness of God, his infinite goodness, his love for men. Every evening they read something, sometimes on the mystery of the day. sometimes in the lives of the Saints, or of the Father of the Desert. Thus did these religious parents edify each other amid their children, but they remarked with wonder the constant attention which little Angela gave these practices of piety. During the reading she seemed rapt and out of herself, and came forth from this exstacy only to express ingenuously her feelings towards Our Lord.

What especially struck her in the lives of the ancient patriarchs, was their courage, in forsaking all to tread in our Saviour's footsteps. She often spoke of it, envying their lot. In consequence of these holy impressions, she one day conceived the idea of forming a kind of retreat in her room. Having communicated her project to her sister, the proposition was immediately accepted; and from that moment they retired daily at certain hours, into the little

oratory. There prostrate before the altar they chanted the praises of the Lord. There they prayed with admirable outpourings of the heart; and to hear them speak of God, they might have been taken for most consummate masters of the spiritual life. Astonishing at so tender an age! To these exterior acts of piety, Angela added the rigors of penance. She most frequently slept on the ground, and always continued to deprive herself of something at her meals. Her delicate constitution would soon have sunk under the austerity of such penances, if her father had not compelled her to relax them, so completely had the love of God inflamed the heart of that young virgin! When they perceived that her health was affected, she was questioned to elicit the cause, she would have blushed even to excuse herself by an untruth, and without concealment declared the whole truth. Her father praised her sincerity, but he forbid these austerities which he deemed impracticable at so tender an age. She yielded for some time to this injunction, but gradually gave way to the irresistible inclination that led her to return to the kind of life which she had practiced at first. While her sister who was charged with observing her, yielded to sleep, Angela adroitly left her bed and spent a part of the night in prayer.

Then it was that she spoke to God heart to heart, and in this solitude too he communicated his graces to her. She soon understood what the Divine Master required of her; and consulting only the holy ardor of pure love that consumed her, she pronounced the vow of virginity in the firm conviction that this sacrifice would be pleasing to the Almighty.

Her zeal in inspiring the heart of her neighbor with the spirit which animated her, did not permit her to hide in silence the holy engagement which she had contracted. She disclosed it to her sister to gain her to Christ, and she succeeded. How indeed could that tender companion resist such a solicitation? "We are" said Angela, "the children of the Saints, can we seek elsewhere than in heaven our true country? Let us turn our affections to Him who resides there. In order to follow Jesus Christ, we must indeed die wholly to self; but by self-denial and suffering, we shall attain the bliss of eternity? Was it not thus that Our Lord entered into the possession of his glory? Remember, too, sister, what we have been told of the tribulations and hardships endured by virgins and solitaries to merit the crown of immortality? The holy books that we have heard, made me make up my mind to complete the sacrifice. Can you sister, be un-

moved by them? Ah! I perceive that you too, yield to the grace which calls us." She could not in fact resist such pressing solicitations; and Angela's first companion was the first conquest that grace enabled her to obtain.

God had prompted the daughters of Merici to make this sacrifice in order to prepare them to offer Him one still more painful to nature. Their loving father, though scarcely forty years of age, was atacked by a violent disease which carried him off in a few years. The whole family bitterly deplored this loss; Angela especially seemed inconsolable. Yet her mother was left to her, and she flattered herself that Providence would preserve her to her, so as not to deprive her of all consolation on earth. "Let us weep no longer, mother" she said, "God has doubtless wished to become your only spouse: he will be too the father of your little ones. We should be unworthy of his goodness if our submission to his holy will did not induce us to calm our grief." Yet the good widow was not long to survive her husband. She first fell into a state of languor, which gave rise to serious fears. Remedies were resorted to, but proved unavailing. Angela's mother expired in the most heart-felt sentiments of piety, commending her children to God.

Her daughters received with her last blessing the expression of these sentiments; in the first burst of her grief she felt tempted to murmur against Providence. "But what was I going to say, O my God," she cried, "pardon my unbounded grief; pardon the youthful wandering of my mind. I adore without comprehending thy designs on me, whatever they may be. Has not this chastisement overtaken me for having loved my parents to the prejudice of the love which is due to thee above all? Thou deprivest me of them now to teach me henceforward to turn to thee alone."

Thus spoke this model of young virgins, in the presence of a number of friends who took a lively interest in the bereaved family. A heart less perfect than Angela's would have been discouraged at so overwhelming a position: but God gave her strength to bear it, by inspiring her with a perfect resignation.

CHAPTER II.

Angela and her sister at their uncle's—They retire to a hermitage—Their taste for solitude —Death of her Sister—Miraculous apparition—Angela makes her first communion.

THE two orphans had at Salo (a town in the district of Bressano) an uncle named Biancozi, a rich and highly esteemed man, but still more worthy of respect for his religious sentiments. Touched with the condition of his nieces, he resolved to be a father to them and took them to his house, after arranging their temporal affairs. With him Angela continued to follow the plan of life which she had formed in her father's house. Every hour was allotted either to work or to spiritual exercises. The virtuous Biancozi, who watched over her with a special care, soon perceived that she practiced abstinences and austerities extraordinary for a child of her years. Happily she had inspired him with a kind of veneration that made him fearful of opposing by remonstrance God's will in her regard.

Pious as was her uncle's house, her heart was not yet fully satisfied. She found it little adapted to her inclination for solitude. What are we doing here," she would often say to her sis-

ter, "exposed as all are in the world? Has not God created us for himself alone? Will he suffer our hearts to be shared between Him and creatures? Ah! sister, let us fly the society of men, which can at any moment ruin us, and let us seek a retreat, where we can please only Jesus, whom we have chosen as our spouse."

Such was the conversation of these young sisters, more united by the happy sympathy of religious sentiments even than by the bonds of nature. The love of God which animated them, soon increased in their hearts to such a degree, that the world became insupportable. Angela moreover received no impulse from heaven to which she did not endeavor to correspond. One day, they went out early under the pretext of hearing mass, at a church outside of the town. As soon as the holy sacrifice was ended, they hastened with no guide but the inspiration of heaven to conceal themselves in a hermitage. Having thus withdrawn from the vanities of the world, they wished to pass their life in the most intimate union with God. But they had in his eyes only the merit of their goodwill, as it was impossible that the knowledge of their flight could long escape their uncle's wise vigilance. He sought them and had search made for them in the houses and churches where he thought they

might be found. The first steps were unavailing, and Biancozi whose anxiety was extreme, formed a thousand conjectures. He dwelt on the thought, that the two girls had several times in his presence conversed on the charms of a solitary life. Then he left the town, explored the country around; at last after a thousand inquiries finds traces of them and reaches the spot of their retreat.

It would be difficult to express the impression produced on the two solitaries by the sight of an uncle whom they loved and respected as a father. How should they justify such a flight? For the supernatural inclination that impelled them to seek a retreat, must appear blamable in the eyes of men. They had therefore to hear many reproaches on the want of confidence which they had shown in their second father; the imprudence of their conduct; on the dangers to which they had so unreflectingly exposed themselves. Still Biancozi tempered by mildness, observations, which he then deemed most just; he added marks of interest and affection, and thus brought back to Salo the two runaway maidens.

The evasion had been noised about the town; some regarded it as a childish freak, others as the result of a passing fervor; but wiser heads conjectured that there might be something

extraordinary in their determination. Biancozi who better than any other knew the solid piety of his nieces, had ere long no doubt but that heaven had a considerable part in that relation.

In this persuasion he in future refrained from offering any obstacle to their decided taste for solitude. He permitted them to form in the most retired part of his house a narrow cell, as well to satisfy the inclination for retirement which they continued to show, as to assure the preservation of the two children, whom he regarded as a blessing for his family. Angela and her sister accordingly began to lead in that house a purely angelical life. Their time was divided between meditation, prayer, pious reading and work; they went out only through obedience, or to visit the church.

So perfect a life led by two children, the eldest of whom was scarcely fourteen, could come only from extraordinary movements of grace. We can indeed conceive that when God has fixed his choice on a soul; when it enters into his ineffable designs to raise it to a state of sanctity, he appropriates it to himself in an especial manner, to communicate his admirable and divine inspirations. In this way the saints participate in some sort even in this life in the sanctity of

God himself, as the crystal does in the rays of the sun. Public opinion conformed to this sentiment, for it was the general impression in the town, that the hand of the Lord was over these two maidens.

Meanwhile it had been decreed in the adorable designs of Providence that this pure and delightful union should be broken. Angela lost her sister at the moment when she would seem least to expect it. A premature death severed her from that tender companion with whom she truly formed but one heart and one soul. As the happiness which she had tasted in her society was great, so the bitterness of the separation was painful to be borne. Perfect as virtue may be, it cannot extinguish natural sensibility. Her heart was tossed by a thousand feelings in the deplorable isolation in which this death had plunged her. Her sister had in fact been her guardian angel ever since she lost the authors of her days. Yet her grief was not of such a character as to diminish the merit of her resignation. She felt to her heart's core the blow with which the hand of the Lord had visited her; but her patience was greater than her grief was deep. "What am I?" she would say to the persons who came to console her: "what am I to oppose the will of my God? My sister belonged to him, he could

then call her to him and deprive me of her. Blessed be his holy name now and forever." The holy will of God is then her whole support and sole consolation in this sad moment; and this one thought, *God wills it*, is enough to bring a calm to her soul, and repress all the thonghts that agitate it. Yet memory came from time to time to trouble the calm which her resignation brought. Her sister died so suddenly, that it was impossible to administer the sacrament. Angela would fain have been appeased as to the eternal lot of her soul. This disquieting desire often recurred to her, absorbing her whole mind. She began to pray more fervently than ever, to obtain of God the signal grace of some assurance on this point. She formed her petition with such simplicity of heart and so ardent a faith, that she became persuaded that God would grant her the favor.

It belongs only to the saints to be animated with such faith, and we are permitted to believe that God inspired his hand-maid with this thought, to favor her with an extraordinary grace. A fortnight had elapsed since Angela lost her sister; and heaven had not yet spoken. Her uncle having conceived the idea of sending her into the country, as well to distract her mind as to superintend the labors of the reapers;

scarcely had she reached a road called the narrow one, when she perceived above her a luminous cloud, and having stopped to regard the phenomenon. "Suddenly!" says the bull of her canonization, "the Virgin Mother of God appeared to her with her sister, who, all radiant with light and attended by a host of angels, urged her to pursue with constancy the path of perfection, promising her one day a share in her glory." The cloud vanished but the young servant of God was left in an astonishment that threw her into an exstacy. Returning to her natural state, she was seized with a new flame of love that filled her heart with the liveliest joy.

She had not yet made her first communion though now thirteen. It seems strange that instructed as she was, she had not sooner received that bread of life that would have been indeed for her angelical nourishment. But she lived, in an age, when Christians, criminally lax, approached but rarely the august sacrament of our altars. God, doubtless, had chosen Saint Angela to serve as an example, and to revive in this respect the piety of the faithful; for, he planted in her heart a peculiar devotion to the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist.

It needed many entreaties on her part, before her uncle, pious as he was, would permit her to

prepare for her first communion. Respectfully and yet firmly she told him how she feared lest she too, like her sister, might die without receiving the holy Eucharist, adding that in her earnest desire to receive her Saviour; she felt inspired to despise the vain reasoning of men. Biancozi could not withstand such pressing solicitations. He took his niece to the parish priest; when she was questioned, amid the children of her age, all present wondered at the wisdom and modesty of her answers.

God had given her from her tenderest years an ardent desire of holy communion. No sooner had she been admitted to partake of this great mystery, than she resolved to taste as frequently as possible of the heavenly banquet. She ran to it like the panting hart to the waters of the limpid fountain. Urged by her extraordinary love, that she had conceived for this adorable sacrament, she clung to it with such zeal that it became her almost daily nourishment. Her example revived the declining piety of the whole town of Salo. It was indeed an edifying spectacle for the people to behold her communicate so frequently, and with a fervor that never belied itself. Her modesty in the holy place, her profound recollectedness in the presence of God, were as striking as they were extraordi-

nary, and unfortunately too rare, even in Italy the centre of Catholicity. This manner of loving won her immense treasures of merits; for who can doubt that our Lord uses the Eucharist to purify our souls from all earthly affections; and to inflame our hearts with the fire of purest love! Thus did he confirm Angela in virtue, and lay the foundation of the virtue to which he wished to exalt her.

CHAPTER III.

Saint Angela enters the Third Order of Saint Francis—Her austerities—her temptations—Death of her uncle, Biancozi—She forms a community of Sisters of the Third Order, at Desenzano—Resolves to devote herself to the education of youth.

YET Angela felt that her fervor was not entirely free amid the world, especially on account of the unhappy times in which she lived. Fearful lest her exalted piety should cause the weak to murmur, she resolved to deprive them of the slightest pretext by connecting herself with some religious congregation. There was then at Salo a confraternity of the third order of

Saint Francis,* the members of which were united in a special profession of piety. Having one day attended the exercises practised at their meetings, Angela felt so edified that she was persuaded that God called her to join it. On presenting herself to the superior, she obtained permission to enter on her noviceship, and assume the habit. Postulants, were usually subjected to a year's probation before their profession; but Angela displayed such fervor in all the exercises; she was moreover so well known for the purity of her life, and the reputation of her virtues, that they deemed proper to except her from the ordinary rule; she pronounced her vows after six month's novitiate, and took the name of Sister Angela.

From that moment she gave no limit to her zeal for frequent communion. Her director permitted her to receive it daily, and she was re-

* Saint Francis of Assissium had founded the Order of Friars Minor in 1221, and soon after that of Saint Clare. To these first creations he added another, which like it, produced most precious fruits of salvation. It was instituted for the sake of the people, to whom he announced the word of God, and took the name of the *third order*. The object of the holy founder was to afford the faithful the means of leading a life like that of his religious, without practising its austerities. Saint Louis, King of France, and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, were members of this congregation.

lieved from all fear of appearing singular. She was seen endeavoring to render herself worthy by her extreme application to advance in perfection. She was truly dead to the world, and her life was hidden with Christ in God. In all things she tried to subject her senses, to overcome her inclinations, and to abandon her soul to the guidance and movements of grace. In one word, she thought solely now of establishing in her heart the kingdom of God, and there it was that she expected to reap the effects of her frequent communion. Grace in fact spreads a great light in the souls which it illumines, as it is easy to remark in the lives of the Saints. It is at first, if you will, a stream fed by the purest fountain; but soon other waters come to swell its tide, and form a river, that flows majestically on, spreading fertility on all around it.

After Angela had taken the vow of poverty, which was however only a simple vow, she observed it so exactly that she would possess nothing as her own. In spite of her uncle's remonstrance she lived solely on alms. There was no furniture in her cell; she took her rest on a mat, with a stone for her pillow. The only indulgence which she allowed herself, was from time to time taking for her bed a heap of faggots. "Am I not even so, better off," she would say,

"than the Saviour of the world. He at the moment of his birth had no place to rest his head?"

All in her showed the spirit of poverty. Her clothes were of unexampled modesty, and they covered the harsh and heavy hair cloth that she never laid aside night nor day. She fasted habitually, and took no food but bread and water, with unseasoned herbs. In Lent she ate only on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and on those days upheld her sinking frame only with a little bread and a few chesnuts. Wine she used only at Christmas and Easter, or when the physician prescribed it in her time of sickness. These facts related by contemporary authors, are resumed by Pope Pius VII., in the bull of the Saint's canonization.

"She frequently," adds the brief, "passed a whole week fasting, contenting herself with the eucharistic food." The eucharist that heavenly manna was then her only food in the desert of this life. It is a kind of miracle that she was able to support life, notwithstanding the exhaustion to which abstinence of this kind must have reduced her.

We cannot indeed avoid the conviction, that Saint Angela was raised up by the Almighty to give to the world once more the example of those

miraculous austerities of the fathers ot the desert, during the first ages of Christianity. The age in which she lived needed great lessons to draw it from the material habits into which it had sunk, from its indifference to the works of God; an indefinable torpidity had seized all minds: and it required the spectacle of more than ordinary virtue to rouse them from this unhappy state. When we read, in fact, the lives of the solitaries of the first ages of the church, they seem to us to be more like angels than men. Thousands of anchorites peopled the Thebais, practising the most extraordinary austerities. They ate only at long intervals, and their repast consisted only of a little bread and water with a few wild herbs. On solemn days only did they add a little salt, but never was the scanty meal touched before sunset. The greatest number ate only thrice a week. Providence had raised up these extraordinary virtues to effect the conversion of idolatrous nations, habituated to satisfy all that the senses exact, to give way to the most gross and material inclinations. The Almighty wished to be himself the virtue and strength of these illustrious penitents, and bring them to find charms in austerities that shock the most our frail human nature.

Would it not seem that a maiden so perfect, so retired from the world should be exempted from all temptation? Every day she mortified her body; every day she offered herself to God a victim vowed to sacrifice. In vain she died to herself and sin, the demon of voluptuousness came to trouble her in her poor cell. Often too, he endeavored to seduce her by thoughts of pride. But so perseveringly did she battle with these temptations, that she remained triumphant. Yet this made her only more austere and more watchful over her senses. "Those who are of Christ," says the apostle, "have crucified the flesh with all its concupiscences." The mortification of the senses is then intimately connected with the Christian life, but it is especially the portion of the elect. The love of God which fills them, renders them ingenious in inventing a thousand ways of practising it. They do not confine themselves to ordinary mortifications, but invent new ones day by day.

Thus lived Saint Angela during the five years that she spent in the town of Salo, after her entrance into the third order of Saint Francis. Although she endeavored constantly to hide her good works, she nevertheless obtained such a reputation for sanctity, that she was commonly named the Saint or the Virgin of Christ. The auster-

ity of her life had not altered the sweetness of her conversation; for charity, according to the Apostle, is patient, full of benignity and easily forgets self to attend only to the interests of its neighbor, to which alone it is sensible. Solitude and the exercise of prayer were doubtless the dearest delights of the young virgin; but the zeal which animated her for the salvation of souls, and the holy ardors of her charity led her to renounce her sweetest consolations to give her time to her neighbor. She did not therefore refuse to appear in the world, when she foresaw that her presence would do any good, or when she found an opportunity of fulfilling any work of charity.

Meanwhile she experienced the loss of her uncle who had brought her up as his own daughter. She had now only distant relatives at Salo, and accordingly resolved to return to her birthplace, where she hoped to be still more useful to her neighbor.

Saint Angela had been struck from her earliest years with the general corruption remarkable in her age. A culpable torpidity seemed to absorb even those families in which faith and morality had been preserved. After endeavoring in the presence of God to discover the cause, she thought that she discovered it in the

negligence prevalent as to the education of the young, and especially of girls. Destined as they are by Providence to lay the first germs of faith in the bosom of families, how can women, themselves brought up without religious principles, make them relished by their children? Thus towards the close of the fifteenth century was evil perpetuated with fearful progression; for the indifference that had crept into the bosom of even the best houses, ingendered there depravity of manners, a spirit of skepticism, in fine that libertinage gained which leads so surely to libertinage of the heart. "The pious and holy education of girls," continues the Sovereign Pontiff Pius VII, "is a fruitful source of blessings for religion and even for society." *

Angela communicated these reflections to her sisters of the third order, who all seemed touched by their importance. "I can," she said, "dispose at Desenzano, of my father's house; if you will follow me there we shall devote ourselves to the education of youth. We shall, no doubt, have much to undergo; but we must plough and sow in order to reap. Nor let our scanty number discourage us, God will infallibly be with us, as we labor for His sake. The

* Bull of the Canonization of Saint Angela.

success of our undertaking depends then on our good will!" This proposition was accepted unanimously, for Angela had long since won the confidence of her Sisters. These pions maidens asked only a brief delay to obtain the consent of their families, and immediately after that hastened to Desenzano. This was about the year 1495. It is believed that they were four in number. Angela must then have been about twenty-one years of age. The remembrance of the virtues which she had displayed in childhood had not been effaced from the memory of the town's folk and the merits of her family were still appreciated.

Before commencing the work which they had in view, these holy maidens endeavored to gain the confidence of the population amid which they wished to carry on their interesting mission. What they did became more efficacious as it was unexampled. They set to work for the poor and for their own part lived solely on the alms of the faithful. They were ever the first at the offices of the Church. At appointed hours they proceeded to the Church to adore the Blessed Sacrament. This conduct edified the whole parish; but public admiration seemed riveted particularly on Sister Angela, wherever Providence called her to labor for the salvation

of souls. Her sublime piety was blended with a modesty and a calm of soul and even a gayety so charming that she won at once love and admiration. Her gentleness had a peculiar charm for winning its way into the minds of those who knew her, and her words went straight to the heart of those with whom she conversed. Her severity in her own regard was equalled only by her mildness, complaisance and goodness to others. Her aim was to make those who approached her relish the good things of eternity and induce them to despise the world: to make them practise virtue and bring them insensibly to works of penance. Above all things she recommended the frequentation of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. She was often seen laying aside her natural sedateness to converse with the rudest men, whose esteem she soon obtained and thus gradually won them. The prudence evinced in these conversations, joined to the sincerity remarked in them, soon acquired the esteem and even the respect of all classes of society. To her companions she was rather the friend than the superior and she ever anticipated their wishes by the most delicate attention. Notwithstanding her predilection for solitude, she lent herself with unparalleled complaisance to afford them

all the relaxations that were not incompatible with the kind of life which they had embraced. Yet ever attentive to the mortification of the senses, she did not lose sight of it even in their hours of recreation, She frequently thence took occasion to edify her sisters by incidents which show how far she carried her self-contempt.

One day as she sat with them near the flowery shore of the Lago di Garda, all admired the beauty of the landscape ; when one of the younger sisters made this reflection : " Another thing strikes me at this moment! " said she, " and attracts my attention full as much ; it is Sister Angela's magnificent head of hair." The others had the weakness to add to this remark, thinking perhaps that such applause would please her whom they regarded as their superior. But the virgin of Desenzano had long since combatted these puerile vanities: and on the spot reproved her companions with a tone of severity not ordinary with her. " I blush, " said she, " to have been innocently the occasion of so ill-timed a remark; but I am still more ashamed of you for not fearing to make it." The virtuous maidens then opened their eyes to the extent of their indiscretion. Angela received their excuse with a sentiment of humility that rendered her more venerable ; but she could not forgive the

hair that had thus exposed her to temptation; in a few months it was no longer to be recognized; so much did she fear pleasing any one but Jesus Christ whom she had taken as her spouse.

CHAPTER IV.

Apparition of the mysterious ladder—God reveals his designs in her regard—Efforts of Angela's zeal at Desenzano—Her trials—The Pentegoli family—Her projected house at Brescia.

THE spirit of light which penetrated Angela, could not fail to make her enter into communication with God. It was during one of these walks that he vouchsafed to manifest his designs as to her. She had that day with her sisters directed her steps to a desert hermitage at some distance from Desenzano. When they had according to custom said their beads, they resolved to proceed a little further into the country. Angela remained alone to pray. As soon as her sisters had got to a short distance, she entered into a profound meditation conjuring the God

of light to illuminate her as to the resolution which she had formed of devoting herself to the instruction of youth. Scarcely had she ended her prayer, when she perceived in the upper regions of the air a mysterious ladder that reached up to the heavens. A numerous band of virgins, and a choir of angels alternately descended the steps of this ladder; their brows encircled by jewelled crowns, and the angels filling all around with music from their melodious harps. Angela easily understood the mystery of this vision; she felt convinced that the Almighty approved the project which she had conceived. To complete the favor he deigned to explain himself in these words: "Angela, thou shalt not leave this world without founding a society of virgins like those that have just appeared to thee." It would be impossible to depict the holy awe of this young and faithful spouse of Christ on hearing the voice of her sovereign Lord. "What am I, O Lord?" she cried, falling prostrate on the earth, "what am I that I should enjoy so wonderful a communication? Canst thou employ so wretched a being as I am to accomplish thy designs? I durst not think of such an enterprise, believing myself destined to serve, or at most to make thy holy name known and adored in my native place. Rely-

ing on thy omnipotent support, I will go whithersoever thy Providence vouchsafes to call me."

Scarcely had she uttered these words, when she perceived her companions. She hesitated at first as to the propriety of communicating to them the vision with which God had favored her. Her humility inspired her with some repugnance, but considering that it was for God's glory, she felt inspired to speak unreservedly. She therefore told them that a great wonder had been wrought during their absence: that God had appeared to her to tell her that he approved the project which they had conceived of devoting themselves to the instruction of youth. "Let us hasten," she cried, "to correspond to the designs of heaven and labor in concert to gain souls to Christ." These last words uttered with a tone of prophecy, and the accent of inspiration, produced in her companions an impression which animated them with the noblest zeal to pursue the work which God had just imposed upon them. They at once believed themselves to be of the number of those virgins who had just appeared with so much glory; and on this hope they renewed to their venerable superior their protestations of zeal to follow her, and to aid her in all that God should require of her.

Notwithstanding her blind confidence in the words of our Lord, Angela at first saw the impossibility of founding at that moment a house out of Desenzano. She waited therefore till Providence put in her hands elements which should lead her to hope that she did not count too much on her own strength. Nevertheless to show her submission to the will of God, she began to form a kind of novitiate; she gathered the children of the town and its environs to teach them their catechism. Besides this the Sisters visited the poor and the sick, distributing in alms what they had received for their own support. Their care extended too to adults who came in crowds to their conferences. They penetrated to the very work shops to instruct the artisans and exhort them to return to the way of salvation.

Angela especially was tireless in the exercise of this ministry. How many young girls were indebted to her for the preservation of their innocence, or the reform of their lives! How many men did she not win from vice! How many feeble Christians did she not preserve from the poison of error! The reform of morals, the holy laws of the Church once more were put in vigor: youth thoroughly instructed in the truths of religion, ignorance

banished from all classes of society. Such were the happy results of the labors of this truly apostolic virgin. ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, she often repeated in order to banish the slightest sentiment of self love. Did her Sisters seek to make her acknowledge the superiority of her talents, far from yielding, she humbled herself in their presence, esteeming herself the last and most useless of all. "Ever bear in mind," she would say, "that without God we can do nothing; but that with the help of his grace we should dare and undertake all." Let us beware then of ever attributing any of our good works to ourselves, ever remembering that all the merit should redound to him alone." These counsels addressed to her little congregation were always received with perfect submission; for she spoke with an air and an accent of conviction which never failed to persuade.

Several years had now elapsed since she began her mission at Desenzano. She felt convinced that God called her to Brescia to create a more important house; but she awaited new orders from Providence. Yet the delay of heaven only inflamed her desire and increased her hope. "The place of my birth," she would often say, "has become a desert to me, since God

has led me to regard Brescia as a promised land; but the children of Israel spent forty years in tents, before entering into possession of the rich land of Canaan. I am doubtless too unworthy of the favors which God has revealed to me: he wished to try me long, as he did the Israelites, on account of my infidelities to his grace."

This was not her only trial. The manifold conversions effected by her ministry naturally rendered her formidable to the enemy of salvation. Never accordingly had she more combats to sustain, it seemed as if all the powers of hell were let loose upon her. Weary of tempting her constantly to no purpose, the spirit of darkness appeared to her in her cell under the form of an angel of light; he hoped to divert her from prayer, or at least to inspire her with some sentiments of vain glory. But her profound humility, the fasts and austerities which she practised, became so many bucklers that enabled her to ward off the attacks of the evil one. "Begone," she cried, "spirit of falsehood. I am here in the presence of God. Thinkest thou to impose on me? That glory that thou now assumest, thy pride has lost. Will it ever be thy cruel joy to torment and pervert Christians? Again I say, begone, loathsome monster; go into the abyss reserved for thee, proclaim thy de-

feat and the triumph of the strong, the Almighty God, to whom I will ever remain attached." The phantom immediately disappeared, and Angela melted into tears before the Lord, giving him a thousand thanks for having preserved her from the most pressing danger in which she had ever been. This victory delivered her forever from such importunities.

The humble hand-maid of the Lord had acquired the unanimous esteem of the province. Her unwearied zeal, and all her works of salvation had drawn upon her the public veneration. She was consulted and her prayers solicited from all sides, even from the city of Brescia. Men felt honored by a moment's conversation with her; and as she persisted in living solely on alms, all made this a pretext for inviting her to take a meal with them. She never acceeded to these requests, but when she had grounds to hope that she would effect some good in the company. Then she accommodated herself to the circumstances; and according to the counsel of Our Lord to his apostles, she took what was set before her. Ever occupied with the interests of eternity, she knew how to make this distraction avail to piety; adroitly turning the conversation on the emptiness and futility of earthly

things, on the sweetness of virtue, on the hideousness and shamefulness of vice. In fine she diffused such a charm in her conversation, that none ever wearied listening to her.

Angela frequented with a holy predilection the house of a gentleman of Brescia named Pentegoli, who every year spent the pleasant season on an estate that he had at Padinga, a hamlet near Desenzano. God had endowed this man with an ardent piety, which induced him to desire to have Mother Angela often in his house. She generally refused his offers, lest her frequent visits to that house, perfect as it was, should distract her from her habit. She went to Pentegoli's only once a week to obtain his protection for her projected establishment at Brescia, and to be edified by the good example and holy emulation, which she received for every kind of good works. This intimacy which lasted ten years enabled Saint Angela to form other acquaintances not less precious; for many came from Brescia to this gentleman's house to hear and consult her.

Meanwhile the time approached when God was to fulfil his promise and grant the prayers of his humble hand-maid. Could Angela have supposed that a sad event was to give occasion to it?

The year 1516 was already far advanced when Signor Pentegoli came to his country seat at Padinga. There he resided with his family till the end of the fall; but scarcely had he returned to Brescia, when a great misfortune afflicted that house. Pentegoli lost in a short time two daughters, sole heiresses of his exalted fortune. He was the more overwhelmed at this loss as his children blended with the nobility of their birth, the finest qualities of mind and heart. With all his piety Pentegoli seemed inconsolable, and nothing could assuage his grief. His wife still more unhappy, unceasingly bewailed her daughters, and it seemed as if the affliction would soon end the life of the disconsolate couple.

At this painful juncture it occurred to them to invite Sister Angela to their house. So earnestly did they press her, that she could not resist their entreaties. She deliberated with her companions, and they thought the journey indispensable. After taking in community the measures necessary to continue in her absence the good effected at Desenzano, Angela immediately repaired to Brescia.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

Angela arrives at Brescia—Her efforts to establish a Congregation—Her life at Brescia—Supernatural favors and lights—Her skill in directing minds—She reconciles inveterate enemies.

PROVIDENCE had directed the event related at the close of the last Book to afford Saint Angela an opportunityof settling permanently at Brescia. There she found Signor Pentegoli and his spouse plunged in the deepest and most bitter grief. Such was their situation that at first she knew not how she should be able to comfort them. Having learned to make herself all to all, after the example of the great Apostle, her first care was to sympathize with their sufferings; she questioned all the secrets of charity, in order at least to moderate their grief. Her presence and her conversation brought them gradually to a Christian resignation which till then they could not attain. They afterwards avowed that Angela alone could have reconciled them to the sacrifice which God had required of them.

The Saint had been but a few days at Brescia when the vision with which heaven had formerly favored her, became the object of her constant thought. The grief of her hosts could not divert her from it; and as soon as she had calmed them, she found herself in turn a prey to the most surprising agitation. In church as well as in the privacy of her chamber, she seemed ever to see that mysterious ladder, and that long line of virgins ascending to heaven with the angels who deigned to bear them thither, What struck her still more was, the words that had echoed in her ears after that wonderous apparition. It engaged her mind night and day, and she soon fell into such a state of agitation, that it became impossible for her to enjoy a moment's sleep. She was not long in understanding that such disquiets sprang from some extraordinary movement of grace. "What wilt thou have me do, O my God?" she would say, "Speak, thy servant heareth, ready to obey thee in all things." Nor did heaven delay to manifest its will. A perfect calm succeeded the tumult that had troubled her soul and she felt that God had heard her. She must now think of establishing a congregation in Brescia, and renounce her stay at Desenzano, where she had hitherto enjoyed so much consolation. This must have been an afflicting

intelligence to the companions whom she had left there. It was necessary to remind them of the words of the divine oracle, which had once so deeply moved them, and show them that their superior would continue to maintain the most constant correspondence with them.

From that moment Mother Angela seemed exclusively engaged in putting into operation the means most proper to facilitate the execution of her enterprise. She had now spent nearly four months with the Pentegolis, who both earnestly desired her to make their home her constant residence. This house could not however serve to realize her project. To console them she promised not to leave the city, or make them less the object of her gratitude and respect. Her sole aim in retiring was to choose a more secluded asylum, better adapted to the fulfilment of her engagement to God. Flattered by the revelation thus made, and full of veneration for Angela, they undertook to find her a house such as she desired.

There was then at Brescia a rich merchant named Mark Anthony Romano, who had recently retired from business to devote his time to good works, and lay up riches in heaven. To him Pentegoli applied to find a retreat for Sister Angela. God had disposed the heart of

this excellent man. He eagerly accepted the proposal made him, and immediately came to offer the pious virgin of Desenzano an apartment, which she gratefully accepted, yet without revealing God's designs in her regard. For though she awaited the execution with a kind of impatience, the time had not yet come : twelve years were still to elapse before she revealed her secret entirely. This glorious destiny was the object of her continual meditations; and yet, strange enough, she never mentioned it, even to her most intimate friends. Her humility made this a law, and human prudence wished her to be silent as to a project, the execution of which she was to expect only from the sovereign Lord of all things.

In her new abode she confined herself to preparing, as she had so long done, to see the days of the Lord, by the constant practice of all Christian virtues. On retiring to the cell which Romano had put at her disposal, she began to exercise all her former austerities, going out only to church. Her modesty in the streets was a model to the other women in the town. Her address was full of grace, and persons often stopped her to have a few moments conversation with her. Then she spoke of God with such unction, that she almost always succeeded

in enkindling the flames of divine love in the minds and hearts of those who heard her. The whole town was edified by her example; each one envied the happiness of her host, and men of every condition regarded her as an angel from heaven.

One day, as she was praying before the altar of Saint Nicholas in the church of the Augustinians, she was ravished in mind, and her body was raised from the ground in the sight of all present, who gave most authentic testimony of the fact. But Angela knew not what fame did not fail to publish to her advantage. An enemy of praise and laudation, her humility would have had much to suffer, if her acquaintance had not most carefully concealed from her what was said of her, and what was the public opinion of her virtues. To bestow any eulogium on her was enough to compel her to new and severer austerities. But the more she humbled herself in the presence of men, the more God displayed in her his glory and power.

It was, in fact, at this epoch of her life, that the humble virgin of Brescia found herself suddenly favored with a supernatural science. Without her having ever applied to the study of letters, without her frequenting the learned, she understood and spoke Latin perfectly. She

translated into Italian the hymns, and many of the prayers of the Church. Nay, more, she commented on difficult passages of Scripture, and discussed with admirable precision all points of dogmatic and moral theology. Never had such prodigious erudition appeared in a woman of that condition. Her host was the more surprised at it, as she had never displayed anything of the kind during the previous three years that she had lived in his house. But the news of this wonder soon spread over the town and its vicinity. Able theologians, distinguished preachers, and all the educated men of the country, flocked to hear her. They came especially from Salo, Padua and Desenzano, where her companions continued to obtain by her instructions and good example, the same fruit of salvation. To such a point was this carried, that Romano's house became in some sort a public school. There Angela received oral consultations, or gave them in writing, thus verifying the words of our Lord, when he affirms that "God has concealed from the wise and prudent of this world," his secrets and the highest truths of salvation, "and has revealed them to the little ones" and the humble. These consultations were enjoyed by those who asked them, and all left the saint edified and consoled.

A distinguished man in Brescia named Thomas Gaverdi, experienced this in particular. Astonished like the rest at all that was said of the extraordinary lights of Sister Angela, he too resolved to consult her; but he wished to seize a moment when she was alone. "I come," said he, "to ask a favor which I hope to obtain from your zeal. I should like to know the means of sanctifying myself in the world, where by my condition I am obliged to live. Tell me, I pray, what I must do, and speak without ceremony; for what brings me here, is the confidence and respect which you inspire. Be convinced, then, that I will take in good part, whatever advice you deem proper to give me."

Angela was at first filled with confusion, and refused to advise a man of such standing; but as he persisted, she said: "As your lordship does me the honor to consult me, and ask my advice, I will, in spite of my ignorance and unworthiness, speak according to the impulse of my conscience. The surest means of salvation are, to do every day of your life, what you would wish to have done at the moment of your death." These words, uttered with energy, went so directly to the gentleman's heart, that he wrote them immediately on his tablets, so as not to forget them. He made it a rule to read them

over every day; and they sufficed to remind him of his duty. He was often heard to say, that next to God he owed his salvation to Mother Angela.

It is also related that a student in the university of Padua, came to Brescia to consult her. His dress was extremely elegant; his tone and manners showed an affectation, that even men of the world would have disapproved. Angela in his presence assumed a severe air, and asked him what he wished. "I am pursuing my studies," said he, "with the intention of entering the priesthood, and I desire to know whether I am really called by God." "You seem governed by an air and by sentiments of vanity," said she, "that convince me that your mind and heart greatly need a change, before entering a state where modesty is so necessary. Renounce first this luxury and superfluity in your dress, and then I will tell you what I think of your vocation." The young scholar did not expect such an advice: he was disconcerted, acknowledged his error, and promised to reform at once. On returning to Padua he embraced the ecclesiastical state, and spent his life in the greatest regularity.

A great scandal then afflicted the town of Brescia. It was caused by two men of quality,

Philip de Sala, and Francis de Martinengue. For many years, these two Brescian nobles could not meet without mutual threats and insults. Often even they had to be separated, to prevent violence. In vain had mutual friends tried to reconcile them; in vain had the Duke of Urbino, and the Governor of Brescia, offered their mediation to settle a dissension, the continuance of which was a subject of alarm for both families: neither would admit that he was wrong, still less humble himself by yielding one jot of his pretensions. Every day men expected some bloody collision between these two irreconcileable enemies. It was reserved to Angela to triumph by the ascendancy of her virtue, and by the power of her prayers, over so stubborn an enmity. No sooner was she informed of the scandal, than her zeal was inflamed for the salvation of these two men, who were evidently so near their ruin. She had recourse to prayer, and fortified by the strength which holy communion gives, she repaired successively to the two rivals, who were both equally surprised to see her. Yet they received and heard her with the respect that virtue never fails to inspire. She was happy enough to induce them to consent to an interview: at an appointed hour they met at her

house; but by different ways, so as to avoid meeting. The holy mediatrix was pained to see them at first assail each other with all the heat that can be conceived in the excess of disordered passion; but far from appearing moved by this, she answered with such coolness, wisdom, and ability, that the two enemies acknowledged themselves vanquished, and begged her to forget their temper. It was a sweet consolation for her to witness the kiss of peace which they exchanged, as a token of inviolable friendship.

The whole city was impatient to know the result of so extraordinary an interview. When they learned that Signors Sala and Martinengue were reconciled, it became for many days the absorbing topic of conversation. The report of it soon spread through the province, and reached even the court of Francis Sforza, the last Duke of Milan. This prince, touched by the many remarkable actions of hers, which were reported to him at the same time, wished to see the virgin of Brescia. He came in fact the next month to see her, but he had not the satisfaction of an interview, for she had just set out on her first pilgrimage to Mantua.

CHAPTER II.

Saint Angela makes a pilgrimage to Mantua—Prince Alloysius Gonzaga—Her pilgrimage to the Holy Land—Loses her sight—Her courage in continuing her pilgrimage—She visits the holy places—Recovers her sight—Fearful tempest — pursued by corsairs — Reaches Venice.

THE venerable mother Hosanna Andreasy, of the third order of penance founded by Saint Dominic,* had died at Mantua in 1505, in the odor of sanctity. Angela had known her by reputation, and had often commended herself to her prayers. She had consequently conceived a particular veneration for her memory. Having learned that many striking miracles were wrought at her tomb, she spoke of it to her host, who easily perceiving that she desired to make a pilgrimage to the spot, offered to lead her thither. It was, accordingly, in the course of the year 1522 that she beheld Mantua, with Romano and some ladies who wished to accomp-

* The author of a life of St. Angela, published at Fougeres in 1837, thinks that Mother Hosanna was still alive at the time of St. Angela's visit to Mantua; we here follow the opinion of the Chronicles of the order of St. Ursula which places this journey at a later period in the Saint's life.

any her. Immediately on her arrival, she hastened alone to the tomb of Blessed Hosanna and prostrated herself to kiss her precious remains. An hour passed over her thus, when her fellow pilgrims came also to offer their prayers. The profound recolectedness of Mother Angela, moved them to tears; joining their prayers to hers, they unceasingly praised the Almighty at the sight of the homage thus paid by a living Saint to the lifeless ashes of another.

Meanwhile prince Aloysuis Gonzaga having learned that the celebrated penitent of Brescia was in Mantua, manifested a desire of knowing her, and begged her to pass through Solfarino where he then was. Angela honored his virtue too highly to refuse so honorable an invitation; she accordingly proceeded to Solfarino after four days stay in Mantua. She was received with distinction and not permitted to seek any lodgings except in the palace. And the prince to show his signal esteem for her, condescended before her departure to grant her the pardon of a criminal who had just been condemned to banishment. When she returned to Brescia her companions who had remained at Desenzano, earnestly entreated her to begin the foundation of her institute; but she had far superior views; it was not from men that she awaited assistance

to take the work in hand, but rather from God; who according to his promise was to aid her in the execution of the undertaking. Moreover the title of foundress alarmed her profound humility. She could not easily persuade herself that God would make use of so feeble an instrument to accomplish so vast a design. Soon returning to herself and confused at having even for a moment doubted the power of the Sovereign master of all things. "No, Lord," she cried with the royal prophet, "I cannot doubt the truth of thy promises. In thee I have placed my confidence, I shall not be confounded."

We may however infer that these perplexities suggested to her the idea of going to the Holy Land to visit the tomb of Our Lord. Her host who ardently desired this pilgrimage, used every persuasion to induce her to accompany him. This importunity induced her to think that it was in the designs of Heaven that she should undertake this perilous voyage; that there perhaps she should acquire new light as to her vocation. She accordingly left Brescia on the first of June 1524 to repair in the first instance to Salo, where one of her kinsmen Bartholomew Brancozi awaited her. They took the road to Venice together, Romano proceeding thither by another route. In this celebrated city they

had to await a wind favorable to sailing. Our pilgrims employed the time they were thus detained in visiting its superb churches and numerous monasteries. Their departure was finally fixed for Corpus Christi. In the morning all three received Holy Communion, and after putting themselves under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin they embarked with a great number of other travellers bound like them for the holy places.

They crossed the Adriatic sea without danger, and the vessel was cleaving her way under full sail through the Mediterranean. Everything seemed to announce a prosperous voyage. Angela had just descried the port of Canea,* when suddenly her eyes darkened, and at the very instant, she found herself struck with blindness. She uttered a loud cry, all gathered around to help her, and each but realized the fact that the pious pilgrim was totally bereft of the sense of sight. This sudden affliction seems the more extraordinary, as it was not preceded by any

* This is a strong town in the island of Candia, and then belonged to the Neuchans. The importance of the port has diminished since it fell into the hands of the Turks, because they have neglected it. The environs of the city are admirable. It is a succession of olive groves, fields, vineyards, gardens, and streams skirted by myrtles and rose-laurels. Canea is the second town in the island.

pain. What a trial for Angela, who had promised herself so much happiness at the touching sight of the spots which our Saviour had sanctified by his miracles and his sufferings! Would not such an accident naturally weaken her courage, or disconcert her resolution? Her guides represented to her the unavoidable difficulty she would give, and the many dangers to which she would be exposed. They remarked to her that in a few days they could reach Venice, where remedies might be obtained and her recovery effected. Angela listened with her usual candor, although she thought far differently. The hand of God which bore her up, and his love which gave her strength, raised her above all these human embarrassments. She convinced Romano and Biancozi that the accident which had just befallen her was only a trial that would ultimately lead to her sanctification; and she induced them to share the courage which she herself felt; to trust in God, and continue under his auspices, the holy voyage on which they had embarked. "I shall doubtless," she said, "be deprived of the consolation of seeing with my bodily eyes the spots that my Saviour has hallowed, but as I tread the earth which witnessed his preaching, his miracles, his humiliation, and his death, I shall adore him, and thus see him

with the eyes of my mind. If I shall have much to suffer, my desire will be gratified; my troubles will make me think more frequently, and more efficaciously, of the sufferings of my God. And if I must die, perhaps I shall have the glorious honor of offering the sacrifice of my life on the way, or on the summit of Calvary."

These words, uttered with the earnestness that the grace with which saints are penetrated always gives, carried conviction to the hearts of her pious friends, and made them determined to go on confidently with their projected voyage to Palestine. The captain of the ship, and the passengers generally, shared Angela's opinion. There was not one who would not deem himself happy to risk all the perils of the sea in the society of the holy virgin. They made sail forthwith for the Holy Land, and the passengers arrived there after a very pleasant voyage.

No sooner had Angela touched the shore, than all beheld her prostrate herself in adoration, affectionately kissing the earth, and offering humble thanksgiving to God. She proceeded to Jerusalem on foot, supported by her pilgrim's staff.

They visited first the Garden of Olives, the solitary witness of the cruel sufferings and sighs

of the God-man; Calvary, on whose summit he expired the holiest of victims; and the Holy Sepulchre, which received the lifeless body of Jesus. For Angela, all was darkness in these localities, so well fitted to strike the beholder's eye, and awaken the sentiment of faith. Yet, as it was, the fervent virgin clung so ardently to the spot, her meditations were so profound, that she had in a manner to be forced from them. Calvary especially, Calvary, that heard the last words, and received the last sighs of Jesus! Oh, who could express the lively emotions of that heavenly soul on the summit of Golgotha! She wished to die of grief and love where love made Jesus die for her. Everything was an eloquent tongue, proclaiming the Saviour's charity; every object which she approached, seemed to repeat his love for men. Here she heard him announcing to the Jews the good news which he had come to bear to earth. There she beheld with the eyes of faith, the multiplication of loaves in the desert. Further on, Thabor recalls the miracle of the Transfiguration. In fine, she visited those towns of Judea, amid which the Son of God so often restored health to the sick, life to the dead, or where an eager multitude came to gather the words of salvation that fell from his lips.

The state in which the Holy City then was, sullied by the profanation of the infidels, was a special subject of bitterness to her. "Why can I not, O my God!" she cried, "why can I not here melt in tears to wipe away these many crimes that thy love cannot yet arrest; to expiate this ingratitude of which I feel myself as guilty as the rest of the human race."

Thus did Angela, by the vivacity and ardor of her faith, supply for what she could not scan with her bodily eyes. So impassionedly did she pour fourth the sentiments of her heart at the several stations, that she inflamed with a kindred zeal all the pilgrims who heard her. Sometimes her sobs deprived her, for a moment, of the use of speech; but soon recovering, she expressed so lovingly her gratitude to Jesus, and became suddenly so eloquent in speaking of the sublimest mysteries, that none could hear her without being deeply impressed. It is easy to conceive that these lofty inspirations contributed signally to her progress in perfection. God had inspired her with the idea of this voyage only to place her heart in a new state of love and grace. By this means he rendered her capable of suffering all things, and undertaking all things to advance his glory. It is Calvary which he has chosen to make her really strong. Thither he

leads her by the hand to offer the sacrifice of her will like Isaac, and immolate herself in spirit as did the Saviour in reality. The cross was accordingly deeply imprinted on her heart. The cross will henceforward be her lot; it will become her life, her strength: and she will so love it, as to be unable thence to live except in suffering."

Fain would Angela have spent the balance of her days at Jerusalem; but her confidence in the promises of the Almighty, the engagements which she had contracted with her companions at Desenzano; the courtesy due Romano and her kinsman Biancozi — all these considerations made her look upon a return to Brescia as indispensable. She accordingly left the holy city. After following for the last time from the early rays of morn, her Saviour's footprints, she proceeded on foot to the vessel, embarking with several persons of distinction, among the rest Paul of Apulia, chamberlain of Pope Clement VII. They had to anchor in one of the ports of the isle of Candia, to obtain provisions, and there they spent twenty four hours, taken up with examining and caulking the vessel. The holy pilgrim who seized every moment to devote to acts of piety, availed herself of this interval to be guided to a church, where a miraculous image of Jesus crucified was venerated. This visit

having been proposed to Paul of Apulia and the other pilgrims, all wished to bear her company. God doubtless inspired this good resolution in order to have witnesses for the miracle which he vouchsafed to perform in behalf of his handmaid. After prostrating herself before the crucifix, our Saint seized with the spirit of God, asked for the first time the cure of her blindness. "Lord!" she said, "if the use of my eyes can be useful to thy glory and the salvation of my soul, vouchsafe to restore me to light. Yet thy holy will be done, not that of a wretched maiden who deserves none of thy benefits." The pilgrims, witnesses of this fervor, were edified and struck with admiration, yet without thinking of the prodigy actually wrought; when suddenly, Angela exclaimed: "I have recovered my sight!" All having gathered around her to assure themselves of the reality of the miracle, joined her in sincere thanksgiving to God. This striking prodigy would lead us to infer that our Lord depriving his pious spouse of the use of her eyes when she was desirous of seeing the Holy Land, had in her regard some secret design of his love, or trial or mercy. He doubtless wished blind faith to be the sole guide in Judea of her who had journeyed thither only in a generous spirit of faith. "Perhaps," says at this point, one of

the authors of her Life, "perhaps God wished by depriving Angela of the great spectacle which her piety would have contemplated with so much happiness, to teach his faithful spouse that the best means of finding him was to seek him in herself, in the depths of her heart, in the solitude of recollectedness and love.

All the travellers felt animated with blind confidence as they entered the vessel which was to waft them back to Venice. They felt assured that in the company of a woman so favored by heaven, they could not fail to arrive happily in that Italian peninsula, and that they would pass the Adriatic without running the dangers which were then so frequent. Two other vessels, which had arrived the day before, in all haste got under weigh to sail in company with the pilgrims.

They could at last descry the Venetian coast, and the three vessels sailing confidently on, were about to enter the mouth of the gulf when, suddenly, so furious a tempest arose that the two vessels foundered in spite of the incredible efforts of the captains and crew. The pilgrim bark wrestled stoutly with the wild billows of the sea, but after nine days toil, all resigned themselves to die amid the angry waves. The passengers and crew were a prey to the most frightful consternation. Their cries of distress echoed over

the waters, and were heard on the shore above the din of the tempest. The people flocked to the water's edge to gaze on them in awe, unable as they were to afford them any assistance. To crown the misfortune, the ship suddenly disappeared, the spectators believed it buried in the waves; but a gust of wind, doubtless sent by Providence, had borne it with incredible velocity close on the shores of Barbary. Angela's desolation reached its height when she heard that she might fall with so many other Christians, into the hands of the Algerines, who were certainly cruizing in those waters. During that long tempest she had ever kept her hands lifted up to heaven. This new danger more terrible than the preceding, did not lessen in aught her confidence in the Almighty. "Vouchsafe, O my God, to aid us," she cried, "Thou who commandest the winds and the waves; speak, and thy servants shall have nothing more to dread from the enemies of thy holy name."

Meanwhile the pirates approached the vessel, now roughly handled by the buffeting of the sea. All on board believed themselves lost beyond all help. Angela alone continued to hope; her confidence in God was not vain, for he had resolved to reward the faith of his humble handmaid. The infidels could not approach, and the

vessel driven towards Venice by oars and by a favorable wind soon reached the desired haven The first care of the passengers was to repair to a church to offer their thanksgiving to God.

CHAPTER III.

Angela's stay at Venice—She repairs to Rome—Jubilee of 1525*—Clemeny VII. welcomes her—Return to Brescia—Visit of the Duke of Milan—She retires to Cremona during the war—A mortal malady brought on by her austerities—Her extraordinary recovery—Affairs of Italy.*

THE ladies of the Abbey of the Holy Sepulchre offered Saint Angela an asylum at Venice. Here she spent some time, rather to engage in pious exercises, than to recruit herself after the hardship and fatigue of so long and painful a voyage. But the report of the many wonders that God had wrought in her behalf during her voyage to the Holy Land, soon spread through the town. The history of her whole life was recounted, and men spoke of the odor of sanctity which she diffused through the monastery which was showing her hospitality. Her

conversation indeed was heavenly; her heroic mortifications and the admirable fervor with which she received daily, were a subject of edification and a motive of encouragement for the whole community. Ere long, ladies of the highest distinction expressed a desire to see her. The Abbess humbly remonstrated giving them to understand that Mother Angela was in a retreat, and that it was her intention to receive no visits. But she had to yield to the importunate petitions of the crowd. Even Senators came to beg her to take up her abode at Venice, and as an inducement they offered her the direction of two charitable institutions. Ever as modest as gracious in her refusals, Angela told them, while expressing her gratitude, that she would consult God to know his will in that regard. Soon after she set out privately for Brescia, with Romano and Biancozi, and arrived there on the 25th of November 1524, after six months absence.

Her return caused unanimous joy in the city; the people flocked from all parts to congratulate the pilgrims and especially Mother Angela. Each one pressed around her to learn in particular the circumstances that concerned her. The candor and simplicity of her account edified the

whole society, and rendered the holy virgin more venerated than ever.

After staying sometime at Brescia, she wished to visit the capital of the Christian world to pray before the tomb of the Apostles, and venerate the relics of the countless martyers who shed their blood for the faith during the first ages of the Church. The consolations which had as it were inundated her soul in Judea, induced her to revere the spots where the Apostles had suffered; in order thus to keep alive in her soul the zeal which had animated her, since she had meditated, at Jerusalem, on the sufferings and death of the Saviour. "I have breathed thy perfumes," said she with Saint Augustine, "they have become an attraction which makes me run and sigh after thee. Thy delights and thy caresses have dried up my soul and excited an ardent thirst. Thou hast touched me, O Lord, and I burn with the desire of beholding thee, for my sole rest is in thee." Like the spouse, in the Canticles, Angela thought of her spouse, day and night. For after having sought him in the East, she went to the West, and ran in every direction after the odor of his ointment.

The sovereign Pontiff Clement VII. had published the bull of the Jubilee in 1525. All Italy prepared for a pilgrimage to Rome, and the

highways were covered with strangers wending their way thither only to gain plenary indulgence. As soon as the season permitted it, our Saint set out with Romano her host, whose charity impelled him to attend her in all her journeys. It was a most sensible consolation for her to penetrate into that ancient Rome, once the centre of idolatry, but become since the foundation of Christianity the see of unchanging truth. With admirable fervor Angela began to visit the tombs of the holy apostles and the churches designated as stations for gaining the indulgence. God permitted her to meet Paul of Apulia, the Chamberlain of the Holy See, with whom she had returned from Jerusalem. He recognized her immediately, and as the position which he held, gave him ready access to the Holy Father, she obtained an audience through him. The pious chamberlain was charmed to find an opportunity of obliging a Virgin of such eminent virtue. He had already informed the Sovereign Pontiff of the miracle which he had witnessed in the Isle of Candia, and of the extraordinary marks of virtue and grace that he had remarked in Angela. Clement VII. accordingly gave her a most gracious reception, admitted her to kiss his feet and gave her his benediction. In subsequent audiences he manifested his desire to

have her fix her residence at Rome, where he proposed to place under her direction a house of hospital nuns. But she stated so candidly and simply the motives which induced her to return to Brescia, that he gave her permission to do so, promising her his special protection. It is easy to conceive how delighted Saint Angela was to find herself thus known by a pontiff from whom she expected such success as she could humanly expect, in the establishment of her congregation. But she had scarcely returned to Brescia when she made another aquaintance that also afforded her great honor.

We have already seen that Francisco Sforza, the last Duke of Milan, had visited Brescia to see Mother Angela before her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and that he had failed to see her as she was then at Mantua. The affairs of government having called him to the Brescian territory in 1526, he remembered all that he had been told of the servant of God four years before. On arriving at Brescia he stopped at a Cistercian monastery and intimated to Angela his desire of conversing with her. Touched by her profound humility, superior judgment and the wonderful facility with which she expressed herself, the Duke received her with respect, and begged the assistance of her prayers for himself,

his house and his dutchy. She promised to remember them all; but she took care to seize the opportunity thus offered of reminding him of his duty to himself and his subjects, portraying the dangers and miseries which are the natural sequels of vice, when the great especially give way to it. This conference did not last long, for Angela saluted the Duke, as soon as she perceived that he was satisfied with her visit.

It was not without grave reasons that Francisco Sforza thus begged the aid of heaven. Italy was then menaced by a bloody war. The troops of Charles V. had already entered his dutchy; and in spite of the combined forces of France, England, Venice and the Papal States, there was every reason to fear that the Duke would not long maintain himself in his states.

God employs various ways to lead his elect to perfection. The most ordinary paths are sufferings and humiliations repeated in a thousand different forms. Had not Our Lord himself to struggle with the prejudices of his day? Most frequently too is he despised in his Saints. Their works produced by the efficacity of his merits were almost always an object of contempt to the indifferent and unbelieving of their time. God wished it to be otherwise with regard to the Saint, whose actions we portray in this picture

of her life. She was raised up to enlighten an indifferent age, when virtue was almost extinct, and piety at least despised among persons in the world; her mode of life quite unusual at that time, might naturally have been the object of ridicule from all classes. On the contrary, we behold her esteemed and sought. And although she studied to practise poverty especially, she was everywhere loved and admired. The more she endeavored to humble herself before God, and in the presence of men, the more God deigns to exalt her by the glory of the works which he makes her accomplish; the more too men seek her and unite in extolling her virtues by their suffrages.

Thus did Angela converse with fruit in the world, after the example of her divine Master, and it seems that the Providence which prepared her to become the foundress of an order of virgins destined to instruct youth, thus brought her into society, to enable her to be an ever subsisting model of the conduct in future times of her many daughters in their daily intercourse with the families which confided to them the education of their daughters. The apostle St. Paul says positively, that it is the good odor of Jesus Christ. Now intercourse with a soul whom grace has sanctified affords a charm to all

who enjoy it. Does not the mere presence of an eminently virtuous person suffice to diffuse a kind of perfume through the foul air and corruption of society? What happy effects may we not expect from her conversations, her wise counsels, all that is winning and even entrainant in her example? The love which Angela had for God, the ardent desire which she felt of seeking his glory, made her undertake a thousand works to reach this end. She would have wished like the Apostle to be anathema for her brethren: this was the source of that complaisance and that heroic charity which led her to converse with all kinds of men; accommodating herself to the capacity of one, conforming to the weakness of another, in order gradually to win them from the allurement of vice and fix them in the way of virtue. To all she gave counsels suited to their particular state, probing with a gentle and exercised hand the wounds of their conscience in order to apply the suitable remedies. All her duties were discharged with a charity of which no example had been seen till then.

Meanwhile the states of Venice were not less menaced than the Milanese. The city of Brescia especially was filled with all the alarm that the horrors of war can inspire. The citizens

had fled in crowds. Angela also alarmed at the approach of the German troops resolved to retire to Cremona. She was accompanied by Pentegoli and his wife, and by Romano, with whom she continued until peace was restored.

This was a blow to our Saint, the more painful to bear up under, as she thought the speedy establishment of her institute possible. Saint Ursula, the Virgin martyr, had appeared to her to encourage her design; and from that moment Angela resolved to give the name of Ursula to the religious congregation which should be erected. But what prospect was there of her succeeding in founding an order in a country then invaded by all the military forces of the emperor Charles V.? She had then to yield for a time to the imperious force of circumstances, and confine herself to seeking means for averting the wrath of heaven. The illustrious penitent devoted herself to prayer in her oratory and in the churches, and fasted every day in the week except Sunday. The rigor of her abstinence was carried so far that she took but one single meal from Ascension to Whitsunday. Her body already attenuated by other mortifications, could not bear up under such austerities. A serious illness seized her and in a few days she was at the last extremity. The physi-

cian having lost all hope of saving her, left her a prey to most exquisite pain. The holy viaticum had been administered to her. Fortified by the strength which that sacrament never fails to give, she supported her sufferings with truly heroical constancy, still thinking of the promises which she had received from heaven. Every thing demonstrated that her soul enjoyed a perfect calm. "Why," she would say to the persons who surrounded her, "why do you take such a human interest in my sufferings? Did not Our Saviour endure the most cruel tortures to ransom us. I willingly make the sacrifice of my life if such are God's intentions, One thing alone is the cause of my fear, that is the rigor of his judgment, but I dare to hope that he will have mercy on me."

Every one admired the resignation with which the pious invalid expressed these sublime sentiments.

Meanwhile the disorder grew rapidly worse. It was evident to all those that drew nigh that Angela had but a breath of life. Signor Pentegoli summoned courage to declare to her that there was no longer any possible remedy, and that she should prepare for immediate death. "Rejoice, Mother," he added, "have patience a few moments more, and you will be put in possession

of your heavenly country." These words were welcomed with a joy that we can conceive only in the absolute disengagement with which God inspires his Saints, when they are about to quit this life. Then the virgin of Desenzano seemed suddenly to revive, and with a loud voice testify to the Lord how much she longed to go to heaven. So well did her words express divine love that they ravished all who heard her. But she soon after fell into a lethargy which was regarded as a symptom and prelude of death; they believed that her pure soul was about to leave peacefully its mortal prison to soar towards the happy abode of immortality. On the contrary when she had continued some time in this species of agony; she suddenly rose up, asking in a loud voice for the Signoras Gallo and Pentegoli, and begged them to hand her her clothes. "Ladies," she said, shedding a torrent of tears, "God has healed me; I could see only afar off the Paradise for which I sighed, Our Lord has no doubt found me unworthy. Let us now hasten together to the Holy Sepulchre of Mount Varallo to give thanks to God for the restoration of my health." Thus it was that the Love of God, which had wounded cured her, according to the expression of the Holy Scripture: for the ardent desire which she had to serve her neighbour had made

her undertake austerities and works of penance which led her to the verge of the grave: and the eagerness which she had shown to be dissolved and be united with God, and his heavenly hosts, was precisely what tore her from the arms of death which Love for God had made her desire. Death must yield to Love, says the spouse in the Canticles, for Love is stronger than death.

Angela dressed without loss of time; and faithful to the resolution which she had taken, she set out with the witnesses of the miracle which had just been wrought. That very evening they reached Varallo. After spending three days there in prayer, she returned to Cremona full of confidence in God's mercies and thoroughly convinced that he would soon set a term to the scourge of war.

It was indeed time that it had ended, at least for the good of religion and the happiness of the nations. In fact the holy league, as it was called, had till then met with nought but reverses. The Constable of Bourbon, who had abandoned the cause of France to join the fortunes of Charles V., had laid seige to Rome in 1527. And although that able warrior fell in the last assault; the capital of the Christian world had been taken and pillaged. The Lutheran soldiers contained in

the army had indulged in the most frightful excesses during the two months that the pillage lasted.* The Pope had shut himself up in the Castle of Saint Angelo to escape the fury of the enemy, was blockaded there, and at last wanted the very necessaries of life. In this painful situation he spent six months and finally escaped from captivity only by disguising himself as a merchant, after allowing his beard to grow. He was flying from Italy to retire to France and put himself under the protection of Francis I., when he was arrested and compelled to accept such conditions as it pleased Charles V. to impose. This prince, intoxicated with his success, pretended that nothing should resist his power. Fear seized the cities of Italy at the mere rumor of the approach of his armies. Most of them preferred opening their gates to exposing themselves to the miseries that had just fallen to the lot of Rome; and to crown their misfortunes, the

* The historians of the time relate that the Lutheran soldiers carried their impious mockery so far as to assume the insignia of the Sovereign Pontiff and the Cardinals; then they formed a conclave in which they elected the heresiarch Luther, after degrading Pope Clement VII. The plague which before the close of the year broke out in the Imperial army, was regarded as a just chastisement of their untold sacrileges and barbarities.

French army commanded by Lautrec had been more than decimated by sickness. A new form of miseries broke the heart of all good Catholics, and especially afflicted that of Saint Angela: this was the poison of Lutheranism, which, under the cover of these troubles, had crept through Germany and many other States. Even Italy contained some of its proselytes. Yet God deigned to show his mercy to his unfortunate people. A treaty was signed at Cambray, between Francis I. and Charles V. in 1529, and the next year peace was concluded between the Empire, the Republic of Venice and the Duke of Milan.

CHAPTER IV.

Saint Angela returns to Brescia—Her exstacies—She is endowed with the spirit of prophecy—She consults Dom Serafino di Bologna as to her Institute—She assembles twelve companions — Visits Milan — Founds her first house at Brescia—Apparition of Our Lord.

For three years Angela had considered herself exiled at Cremona. The cessation of hostilities made her hasten her return to Brescia. Wish-

ing to lead a life more solitary even than she had before these occurrences, she renounced the generous hospitality which Mark Anthony Romano had afforded her. She took up her abode near the Church of the Cistercian monks in the parish of St. Clement. There she daily heard mass with a pious maiden whom she had chosen as her companion. There it was that one day assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, she was publicly rapt in exstacy, while she was meditating on the mystery of the Son of God immolated for the salvation of mankind. Her body remained raised up from the earth for a considerable period of time, and this prodigy was remarked by all those who were in the Church. On returning to herself, the poor penitent was extremely humbled to learn that all the people had witnessed so extraordinary a favor; and yet, this same exstatic state was repeated, shortly after, in another Church at Brescia. All in the city were soon acquainted with these miraculous events, they became the common topic of conversation. But the public astonishment increased singularly when they learned that to so many supernatural gifts God had added the knowledge of future things. After her return from Cremona, Angela had been visited by a great number of persons who congratulated her on her extraordinary re-

covery of health. Doctor Fracagno, her nephew came from Desenzano without notifying her. She knew that he was about to enter the house before he was announced. "Go open the door," she said, "my nephew has come to see me." From him she learned that two of her companions were dead and that two others were about to return to their families at Salo. This information produced a lively impression on the maternal heart of the holy foundress; for she relied on these companions for the execution of her enterprise. To obtain consolation she prayed more fervently than ever, and God induced her to hope that she would soon be enabled to put her project in execution.

In the same way she had a presentiment of the coming of another kinsman, a Canon of San Mazaro at Brescia. He was greatly surprised and could not approach her without respectful awe. But greater still was his admiration, when he saw his venerable relative, converse with him on his past life, and reveal to him the actual state of his soul. He could not conceal what had struck him so much in this interview. On his side Doctor Fracagno was not more discreet; so that the city and in fact the whole province resounded with accounts of these miraculous occurrences. God, doubtless, had wished to verify

in his humble hand-maid this prophecy of Joel: "*It shall come to pass . . . . that I shall pour forth my spirit on all men: your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.* (Joel ii. 28.) We know that this grace was frequently accorded to the Saints. The spirit of God, which was in them, made them penetrate all things, rendering them according to the expression of Saint Peter "*partakers of the divine nature*" (Peter i. 3.) Conformably to this doctrine the holy Council of Trent declares that the Holy Ghost resides in an especial manner in a soul which is enriched with the gifts of grace. It is thus that God displays his power in the Saints, who are the members of the mystical body of Christ. He uses them to procure His glory and accomplish his designs. Let us not then be astonished that Angela should see the absent and penetrate the most hidden secrets of the human heart. The spirit of God which possessed her, employed her to work great prodigies, convince men and then force them to avow that nothing is impossible to him who can do all things.

We may also suppose, that God thus disposed minds to advance the accomplishment of the important work, to which he destined his servant. She had reached the age of sixty years. Supported by the high reputation which she had ac-

quired, aided by the protection of the Sovereign Pontiff and of several princes of Italy; sought by all the families of the country distinguished by their virtues or the rank which they occupied; it would seem that she might undertake any project, and that she should no longer deliberate on the establishment of her congregation. Incessantly alarmed nevertheless, by the difficulties, which, under a thousand different forms, assailed her mind, the humble virgin still hovered in uncertainty. For on the one hand she represented to herself her own weakness, and on the other, the order of God manifested in the vision of the miraculous ladder. She could not persuade herself that Providence wished to employ a poor maiden like herself for so remarkable a work. In spite of the desire which she felt, of extending God's glory, her will remained undecided. So deeply had humility taken root in her heart that she durst not take her resolution. She opened her mind to Dom Serafino di Bologna, Canon Regular of St. John Lateran, who then directed her conscience; and she informed him of the revelations which God had deigned to make her. This religious, at first, fearing some illusion, wished to take time in order to base his opinion with greater maturity. He studied in particular the

vision of Desenzano, obtained a statement of the impressions which it had produced in his spiritual daughter, he then inquired into the dispositions which God had infused in her heart, and subjected her to long trials. Both prayed much. Seeing at last that his penitent persisted in her humility and in her declarations, he no longer hesitated to decide that she should submit to the orders of heaven, and engage with courage in the labors of so lofty an enterprise: that God having declared for it, there was reason to trust that he would remove all obstacles and surmount all difficulties.

Angela received this decision with perfect submission; and to show the profound respect which so enlightened a director had inspired her, she began by associating with herself twelve ladies of Brescia;* but she at first proposed to these companions only a more retired life that they should lead in their several homes, with meetings to take place on appointed days. She wished thus to lead them gradually to take

* These twelve Ladies most of them of noble families, who were the first bases of the Institute are cited in the Chronicles of the order of Saint Ursula. They were Simonna Borais, Catherine and Dominica Doleti, Dorozilla Zinetti, Pelerina Cazali, Clara Gaffuri, Paula and Rose Peschiere, Barbara Fontani, Clara de Montenengue, Margaret de Lorme and Mary Bartolet.

part in the execution of her great design. It was to offer them to Our Lord and to present herself as a victim that she made a second pilgrimage to Mount Varallo in the month of August, 1532. Two days were devoted to this, during which the Mother and daughters were remarked for their modesty and ardent piety. In this mode she taught them the ways of prayer, and showed them the excellence of the spiritual life. They returned by the way of Milan, where Saint Angela wished to venerate a celebrated relic. This was her only design; she had no idea of seeing the Duke, and even supposed that he would be ignorant of her arrival. But Francis Sforza, who had established an admirable police, had no sooner learned that his spiritual mother was in the city, than he made inquiries as to the spot where she was stopping and proceeded thither secretly to invite her to his palace. She promised him to go, and he received her the next day with every honor. The courtiers could not unravel the motives that induced him to show such respect to a stranger whose costume and manners were so little in harmony with the usages of courts; the prince felt obliged to give a public explanation, and thenceforward, his household vied with each other in testifying their veneration for the austere penitent of Brescia. Sforza earnestly de-

sired her to settle in his States, for since the peace of Cambray, he was more happy and powerful than ever. He made her the proposition in the presence of her companions, during the meal which he offered them in common. Angela replied with that modesty so familiar to her, yet without making any definite promise. The Duke having become aware of her embarrassment, thought that he would be more successful in a private interview. In this conference he begged her to settle in Milan, promising her aid and encouragement in all the good works which she should see fit to undertake. So powerful, however, were our Saint's motives for declining, that the Prince felt he could no longer insist; but he begged her ever to be mindful of him in her prayers.

A noble lady of Brescia, Isabella de Prata, filled with respect for the eminent virtues of the holy foundress, offered her a house which she owned near the Cathedral. Angela accepted it the more readily from its location in a sparsely inhabited section of the city, and from the liberty allowed her of altering the interior arrangements to suit her purpose. She first established an oratory, where she set up paintings to represent the various mysteries of Religion. There the saint spent her days and

nights in prayer to consult the Almighty. "Thou knowest, O my God," said she, "that my desire is to labor for thy glory. I am thine alone: never, no never had I any thought but that of devoting myself solely to thy service." Two years elapsed before this timid solitary dared to speak openly of her projected institute. In vain did her wise director re-assure her as to an enterprise, which, in his opinion, could not but be pleasing to God. No motive had till fixed her resolution, nor overcome the extreme distrust which she felt in her own strength. God had to express his will again.

One dark night, Angela knelt in her oratory, meditating alone. All at once, she perceived an angel approach her with a rod in his hand, raised to smite her. This prodigy seemed the more overwhelming to her, as our Lord had hitherto shown himself to her as a God full of sweetness. She felt annihilated by the glance of the heavenly Spirit. At once she fell prostrate on her face in fear, silently awaiting the words that were to fall from the lips of the envoy of heaven. Having suddenly risen, despite herself, O, still greater surprise and confusion! Our Saviour himself stood before her, and addressed her the following severe reprimand. "Where then is thy

faith," he said, "How, after so many striking evidences of my will, could you so long delay to found a religious order, the importance of which I revealed to thee. Wilt thou forever obstinately refuse to contribute to my glory, and the good of my Church? Must I accuse thee of a want of zeal and call in doubt the protestations of fidelity that thou hast made me."

What can the poor virgin reply to this reproach? At first she shed torrents of tears. "Vouchsafe, O Lord," she then exclaimed, "vouchsafe to forget the negligence of my past life. Thy words have reached the very marrow of my bones, aud I am filled with intense pain. Unable now to doubt of thy designs in my regard, I wish to atone for my guilty delay, by the most complete submission, for from this day I begin to show Thee my regret, my zeal and my submission to thy holy will."

At daybreak Angela hastened to the Church of St. John Lateran to relate to her director the new miracle which God had just wrought, and the promises which she had made him. She deplored, as so many grevious faults, the delay she had hitherto made in executing the work. She then received with greater fervor than ever; and on returning home her first care was to draw up the plan of her Institute. A few days

afterwards it was imparted to her companions, who all undertook to follow the rules. Sincere thanksgiving was paid to the Lord for this first benefit, which was regarded as a signal trait of his infinite goodness. But, in order to draw down still more abundant blessings on her and her sisters, she proposed to them to follow the exercises of a retreat together, in order to prepare like the apostles, to fulfil with fruit, the functions to which God deigned to call them: they consented with equal joy and eagerness.

Thus did the holy foundress at last determine to carry out the will of heaven, and overcome the repugnance, which till then had checked her. A new aid of grace was needed for this step; it shows us that it is not enough for God to give us good will, but he must moreover give our souls the power of action, by a new grace. According to the sublime expression of Saint Paul, "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will." * Thus it is that a soul, otherwise very perfect, may know God's will, without immediately putting it in execution: so that, according to the Council of Trent, we must in all our christian works be prompted, accompanied and followed by grace.† So subjected is man to God's will that

* Philipp. ii. 13. † Sess. vi. ch. 6.

he should wish nothing, do nothing, but with Him. Thence depend the happiness of the worker and the perfection of the work. For God blesses only what is according to his spirit, and according to the views of his Providence. Vain is it to plant or water, if he himself give not the increase.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Foundation of the order of St. Ursula—Its objects and labors—Vocations of the new order—Its form—They are called the Divine Company—First Chapter of the order—Virtues of the first Ursulines—Rules and Formulas—Directors and protectresses of the order—St. Angela wishes to resign the position of Superior—She seeks the approbation of the Holy See.

On the 25th of November, 1535, Angela and her companions left the oratory where they had spent many days in the fervent exercises of a retreat. All felt animated with the noblest zeal; all had taken the generous resolve to devote

every instant of their life to instruct the young, enlighten ignorant women and girls, visit and nurse the sick, console and encourage those whom poverty or bad example exposed to danger of ruin. The object of this first institution was, therefore, to blend to the contemplative life the labors of the active life.

One would have thought of the Apostles issuing from the upper chamber after the descent of the Holy Ghost. The new community spreads over the city, and soon gathers around it a great number of girls; they were especially the poor whom they took to instruct; the sisters were, moreover, to be found everywhere, in the hospitals, and even in the dungeons. This was to the people of Brescia a spectacle the more touching, as they had never witnessed such ardent charity. A month had scarcely elapsed when the foundress beheld herself at the head of seventy-two virgins, whom she applied herself to form to the labors of her painful ministry. Such success in a city, till then so indifferent for the interests of heaven, no longer permitted a doubt but that the finger of God directed this enterprise; for these novices who had, for the most part, led a careless, worldly life, now felt inflamed with so sublime a fervor, that nothing arrested them in the pursuit of

their apostolic labors. To such a point did their zeal go, that ere long, the spirit and charity which animated the primitive Christians revived in the city of Brescia.

In order to offer no obstacle to the sudden multiplicity of vocations, the foundress at first would form only a simple association, so that postulants and even professed did not leave their families: there they fulfilled a special ministry, edifying all by their example, and confirming them in the faith by their exhortations. Saint Angela wished to form in the midst of the world models of piety to form a barrier to the sad progress of the Lutheran heresy which then spread over Germany and threatened Italy. Sweden and many of the German States had already broken with the Holy See. Nay more, the king of England, Henry VIII., had declared himself the head of religion in his dominions, out of hatred to Paul III., who opposed his divorce from Queen Catharine, his lawful spouse. Since the late war Italy swarmed with secret Lutherans, men well fitted to cause the greatest evils. Calvin in his turn had taught his errors in France. When expelled from that kingdom, he sought to establish himself at Geneva, and this was a dangerous neighbor for the Brescian territory and the neighboring cantons.

There erroneous opinions in religious matters seemed to incline towards the pretended reformation.

This plan formed with great wisdom was approved by the ecclesiastical superiors. Like her they expected that in happier times, the association would tend to a higher perfection by leading a community life. It would have been necessary moreover to draw up at once constitutions which required a long and serious examination.

Heaven had directed the intentions of the foundress in this initiation of so many virgins in the evangelical ministry. All were animated with the holiest emulation: each strove to mark the greatest devotedness to advance God's glory and her neighbor's salvation. Eulogies of the new association were heard from every lip; such a reputation did it acquire from the outset at Brescia that the name of Divine or Holy company was given to it. The Bishop and the magistrates had approved the conferences held every Sunday in the common oratory: persons of quality frequently attended, and such was the success of these apostolic sisters, that all the faithful of the city soon formed only one heart and one soul.

It was now necessary to give a form to the new congregation. The Sisters earnestly de-

sired it, and Mother Angela herself had deferred it only to try their zeal. A day of meeting was appointed to elect a superior and assign a name to the institute They resolved also to determine the respective obligations which it was necessary to impose on themselves in order to become more useful to their neighbors.

Saint Angela having wished to spend in prayer the night preceeding this meeting, God threw her into a state of ecstacy, in which she saw Saint Ursula crowned with all the attributes of heavenly glory. Deeply touched by this new prodigy, she hastened to the church at daybreak, communicated with redoubled fervor, commended herself to the Queen of heaven and earth, and after spending two hours in prayer, she returned full of confidence to the appointed spot, that is to say, to her oratory, whither all her sisters repaired also at the same time.

The chapter was opened by the invocation of the Holy Ghost, and when Saint Angela had exposed to her sisters the important object of their meeting, she made them alternately give their suffrage, urging them above all things to consider the views of Providence, without any regard to her. Her surprise and her affliction were extreme, when she remarked that all voices were united in her favor. The sisters remarked

to her that they had acted in this election according to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that, from this motive, they were of opinion that she should assume the twofold title of foundress and superior. "Be then our common mother," they added; "we venture to hope too that the congregation will take your name. As to our general and particular obligations, dictate them yourself, and rest assured that you will ever find us respectful and docile daughters, punctually fulfilling your will. With a feeling of humility that had covered her with blushes, Angela replied that God alone having formed the establishment, all the glory should be referred to him; that for this reason she could not allow herself to be treated as the foundress. "Nor can I permit," she said, "that your order be known in the world by my name. I confine myself to accepting the post of superior, which in spite of my unworthiness you have confided to me. You shall be placed, my daughters, under a protection at once, more powerful and more honorable; you will take the name of *Ursulines* or *Daughters of Saint Ursula*—of that illustrious virgin, who, by her instructions and sublime example, sanctified so many others. You must know that she deigned to appear to me all radiant with the marks of her glorious mar-

tyrdom. Take her then to be your patroness and mine. May we under her powerful protection, solidly instruct the young, propagate the Catholic faith, and extirpate error and vice. Let us, like her, gain heaven by the purity of our minds and hearts, by our attachment to the Roman Church, and by our fidelity in fulfilling the engagements that we contract to God."

It was also resolved in this assembly, that they should meet every Sunday to arrange the labors of the week; examine and determine the proper places and persons for the exercise of their charity; that to avoid all confusion, and to render their labors more useful, each one should take care of a different street or section. As to dress, Saint Angela permitted them to wear those they had worn till then, provided they were modest. She even believed that the ordinary dress, might, under their actual circumstances, afford them a more easy access to the interior of families, and tend consequently to the dearest interests of religion. "Let us continue then, my sisters," she resumed; "let us continue the work thus happily begun. Aided by the help of his grace, let us go in the name of Our Lord, go whithersoever his interests call us, rendering ourselves in a manner the slaves of our brethren in order to work out

their salvation. Let us carefully direct our care to the most ignorant and the poorest. May we by our instructions and good example gain all hearts to God."

The venerable mother spoke with so much unction and such a deep feeling of conviction, that her daughters never wearied of listening to her. All shared her opinion as to the name the congregation should bear. All, too, spontaneously promised her the most entire obedience. Angela expressed the joy which she felt, and showed how sensibly she was affected by their confidence. She embraced them, and each one seized the opportunity to reiterate her protestations of obedience and attachment.

When left alone in the oratory, the holy Foundress hastened to thank God for the happy result of this first chapter. And acknowledging in her own weakness, the infinite power of the sovereign Master, she was but the more convinced of the intervention of his supreme protection in a foundation effected with so much care, and yet without any human means. The works of charity were pursued with still more ardor. Jealous of advancing God's glory, these holy sisters often repeated these words of the Apostle, "We are God's coadjutors."*

* I Cor. iii, 9.

Whoever indeed serves God and co-operates in any good work, merits to partake of his recompenses, and as God desires nothing so much as to communicate himself to man, so too there is nothing more advantageous to man than to devote himself to good works.

Besides these consolations which the holy foundress enjoyed while accomplishing the holy mission which Providence had confided to her, she beheld with happiness all the members of the new order devote themselves to cultivate the most beautiful harmony. The little passions which glide so easily into the human heart, had no hold on these holy sisters. There was not one but deemed herself the last and most incapable of all, so attentive were they to follow in this respect the model which God had given them by placing at their head so perfect a superior. On her side, their spiritual mother studied to treat them with the same charity. Never did the predilection which she felt impelled to grant to some, become a subject of affliction for the others. She had extraordinary tact in discerning and bringing out the least talent. She mingled so much grace and mildness with what she prescribed, and found so surely the path to the heart, that she always obtained the most perfect submission.

So perfect a direction, and such a combination of virtues could not but favor the increase of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Ursula. Accordingly the number of novices daily increased. It was on this occasion, that, by the advice of enlightened persons, Mother Angela compiled for her religious special rules of conduct. A formula of promises for professions was at the same time drawn up, and the administration from that moment assumed a character fitted to maintain the sisters in the spirit and fervor of their vocation. The better to attain this end Saint Angela chose for her daughters the most accomplished doctors in the exercise of the spiritual life. They were Father Paul of Cremona, Canon of the Lateran, Dom Chrysanthus, Canon of St. Peter's of Mount Olivet, and Dom Francis Alfranella, a man of eminent piety, who subsequently founded the Congregation of the Fathers of Peace. No sooner did he know Saint Angela, than he became extremely attached to her interests, and to the progress of the order of Saint Ursula. It was his wish that the congregation should be placed under the protection of eight ladies whose names have been preserved. They were Lucretia, Countess of Lodronne, Genevieve de Luzaga, Mary Devogrado, Veronica de Bazza, Ursula de

Gavarda, Jane Dei Monte, Isabel de Prata, and Eleanora Pedezzora; all animated with the noblest sentiments and belonging to the most illustrious houses in the city. After Saint Angela had confirmed them in virtue, and had infused into their hearts the spirit of zeal and charity which consumed her own, she bestowed on them the title of governesses of the order. From that moment they took an ever increasing interest in the prosperity of a society of which they considered themselves the temporal mothers. They labored with the foundress in the preparation of the constitutions, where all breathed the wisdom and mildness which made up Saint Angela's character. The spiritual counsels and the testament which are seen in the next chapter are in a measure the commentary of these constitutions. She there foresees even the changes which coming centuries might operate in her institute.

All then was succeeding according to her heart's desire in the execution of her enterprise. The number of novices constantly increased and the Congregation already embraced sisters of every rank, some of the very highest birth. One thing however was still wanting to ensure the perpetuity of the institute; the constitutions had not yet received the approba-

tion of the bishop of Brescia, Francis de Confinaro, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. A petition formed for this purpose was received by Lawrence Mutiero, who undertook in the absence of the prelate, then at Rome for affairs of the whole church, to examine the rules and constitutions of the new order, whose imminent services he daily appreciated. He approved them, and Cardinal Confinaro, who shortly after returned from Rome, also confirmed them.

Meanwhile Saint Angela was advancing in life, and as her years multiplied, she felt the more the weight of the office of Superior imposed upon her. Her infirmities seemed as a pretext for which to ask her dismission. She frequently conversed of it with her sisters, and it was at last resolved to hold a chapter for the election of a new superior. It took place on the appointed day. There Angela represented that her health no longer permitted her to continue the exercise of the office confided to her; and in spite of the tears and supplications of her affectionate daughters, she persisted in giving in her resignation. All minds had become greatly agitated, but the bishop, informed of what was passing, suddenly appeared in the meeting. "What!" said he to the Superior; "would you then thus abandon a community

scarcely established, which you have commenced, and which is supported only by the confidence due to you personally? What has become of the solicitude and attachment which you have hitherto shown? Can you, without wounding your conscience, abandon an office which has become so dear to your daughters, and which you have filled only three years? I wish you to retain it all your life to consolidate the work which you have undertaken with so evidently providential success. In the name of God I command you to continue your functions as Superior."

Saint Angela had laid down in the constitutions, that wherever the Ursulines should be established, they should be subject to the jurisdiction of the bishops. She owed to succeeding ages a great example of submission to her own superior; she had then to submit, and did so at once, without offering any observation. On resuming the exercise of her duties, she devoted herself with a new zeal to discharge its painful functions, for the sake of religion, and for the spiritual progress of her daughters. This circumstance seemed even to contribute to bind still more closely the knots that united her to the congregation. Her numerous daughters came to her oratory more assiduously than ever,

to receive her instructions, and they showed an admirable docility and candor. Each religious gave an account of her labors, and never undertook any without consulting the Superior. All left these interviews greatly consoled, and inflamed with a more holy ardor to seek their neighbor's salvation. God had communicated to his faithful servant a supernatural fire which animated those who entered into communication with her. Or rather, as one of the authors of her life expresses it: "Angela was amid her daughters like a sun which illumines them with its light, and like a furnace of love that set them all on fire." It might have been said, in brief, that her words gave her companions a new life, and an incomparable ardor for the completion of her work of regeneration. It may easily be conceived what fruits of salvation were the results of the evangelical ministry of so many fervent virgins, united now to the number of one hundred and fifty.

This extraordinary increase of the congregation, far from troubling the Superior's peace, on the contrary, increased her joy, for the daughters persevered in their first vocation. Each one of them consoled her, and gave her occasion to thank God for the success obtained

by her ministry. So perfect an order of things sprang from the prudence with which the Almighty had endowed his humble handmaid. It was, in fact, in the exercise of this virtue, that she more evidently displayed the spirit of God which animated her. It will consequently appear less surprising that her order had so happy a commencement, or was propagated with such prodigious rapidity.

The Holy See had not yet confirmed the new Institute. It was feared that this defect would, sooner or later, embarrass its progress. Saint Angela felt her end approach, and those who were attached to her, also feared for its days. In this state of things, the ladies associated with her as governesses, urged her to solicit from the Court of Rome, a confirmation of the constitutions, which had already, as we have seen, obtained the approval of the bishop of the Diocese. She herself yielded to the suggestion the more willingly, as many of her daughters awaited only this occasion, to go and establish the order at her native town of Desenzano, where all knew she so ardently longed to replace her old companions. But Providence had doubtless decreed that her mission should not exceed the limits of the territory of Brescia. She beheld only in the future, the progress that her be-

loved congregation of Ursulines was to make, and, which God, doubtless made known to her, as of old he showed to Moses from afar the land that he destined to his people.

In spite of the extreme weakness of her constitution and the delicate state of her health, Mother Angela had never consented to retrench anything from her habitual fasts and austerities. She fell almost suddenly into a state of languor, which she considered as a forerunner of her death. In the early part of January, 1540, when she saw herself condemned to remain in her cell, she gathered around her the governesses and officers of the association. "My career," she said, "is drawing to its close, and ere long I must leave you. I have therefore resolved to address you some counsels which particularly concern you, and which I have had transcribed by my secretary, Gabriel Cozzano: he will read them to you. I have reason to hope that you will receive them with the indulgence that you have ever shown, and even with the submission that you have never failed to testify."

CHAPTER III.

*Counsels of Mother Angela to the Governesses and officers of the Order.**

ANGELA, unworthy servant of Jesus Christ to her most beloved daughters and sisters, assistants and directresses of the Society of Saint Ursula.

May the grace and power of the Holy Ghost be ever with you; may they aid you to bear your respective burthens; in order that you may merit the rewards which God reserves to those who remain faithful to him. Devote yourselves then unceasingly to the spiritual advancement of the chaste spouses of Christ, who are confided to your care. Watch over their preservation with a truly maternal solicitude. The enemy of salvation will often prowl around this dear flock to surprise and devour it: fear not this attack; but have recourse to God; implore his aid

* All the lives of Saint Angela that we have consulted close with the counsels and the testament which she left her Sisters. They are always the same in substance, but the text is more or less extended. We have combined these various versions, taking care never to depart from the thought.

unceasingly, in order to put your flock in the way of salvation. I cannot too earnestly conjure you to give this the greatest attention; for the esteem you attach to this recommendation will be the measure of the love that you will show it; and the purer and stronger your love is, the greater will be your care in preserving the treasure that God has confided to you. Reflect that it is through a most special grace that he has called you to the direction of his community; fail not to thank him daily for so glorious a benefit and endeavour to correspond to the views of his Providence. Above all things beware of giving way to discouragement. Even should it happen that you think yourselves not possessed of all the qualities necessary in the exercise of your duties: God who has called you will not abandon you, and will if necessary extend to you a helping hand. Content yourselves with doing what you can, and beg this God of goodness to add what you may seem to be wanting in. For my part I beg you by the passsion of Our Lord and by the merits of his Most Holy Mother, to receive with submission the counsels which I am about to give you and to follow them strictly, never swerving from them in the least. They are dictated by the love I bear you, and they will be for the

Institute, after my death, a perpetual token of my affection.

I. The first counsel which I have to give you, my beloved sisters, is to devote yourselves unceasingly to the practice of humility: to be thoroughly convinced that you lack essential virtues to exercise the functions of superiors or counsellors; that you are but unworthy servants of your companions; that you need as much as the last of them, to be guided and mastered; that moreover you are entitled to no preference over them. When, by a lawful choice, you are called to fill any office in the Congregation, endeavor to make a good use of your authority, and seek distinction only in the humblest opinion of yourselves. Herein take as your model the Saviour of the world, who, God as he was, nevertheless repeated over and over, that he came not to command but to obey. "Let him who is greatest among you," said he to his apostles, "regard himself as the servant of all." Never pride yourselves then on your merits or talents. Ah what have you, that you have not received from God? He drew all things from nothing when he created the world: he did the same in giving you existence. You were nothing and it was on this nothing that it pleased him to act, making something of you. It is really

wishing him to leave us and think no more of us, to dare to make any pretensions of our personal qualities. We must of necessity annihilate ourselves to merit our Creator's confidence. Do you wish to be ever agreeable to him? Never forget that you are only what he himself has made you: that you can do nothing except by his grace, and that nothing will succeed except so far as he deigns to give it his blessing. Such are, my sisters, the ideas that you should have of yourselves in the discharge of the most eminent posts; you will thus merit that God should exalt you as much as you humble yourselves.

II. Be affable and polite towards your religious. Whether they need exhortation or reproof let your words be constantly seasoned by mildness; in order that they may feel convinced that you have spoken to them in a spirit of charity, and from your desire to see them advance in the ways of perfection. Rely, in general, much more on cordiality than in rigor. Prefer, as far as you possibly can, obliging manners, and resort to correction only when all other means fail; and then only as the circumstances, the time and the character of the persons shall seem to require it. Take charity as your guide in that as in all other things. This virtue which should

constantly make you tend to act for God's greater glory and your neighbor's salvation, will enable you to appreciate the circumstances where it will become you to use mildness or severity.

Among your daughters you may find timid dispositions, fearful and pusillanimous minds. Beware of intimidating them still more. Study on the contrary to console and re-assure them. Speak to them with kindness: induce them to put confidence in God, often repeating to them that his mercies are infinite. And far from keeping them in their sombre melancholy, endeavor rather to inspire them with a decent gayety which cannot be incompatible with true piety.

If, on the other hand, it should happen that another sins by presumption; inculcate in her a salutary fear of God's judgments. Make her feel the danger of having a heart inconstant in his service, and remind her that tepidity is a fearful state. Often warn her to be on her guard. Speak to her even at times with a kind of severity, and omit nothing to shield her from the snares spread by the enemy of salvation.

III. Profess a perfect obedience to the superior who shall be chosen to succeed me; be equally submissive to the principal directresses. Carefully avoid following your own will, in the firm conviction that by obeying you shall have

the two fold merit of yielding to my will, absent though I be, since you have chosen me in spite of my unworthiness, as your first superior; but especially of yielding to the will of God, who is the first author of this Society. If it happen that your duties are incompatible with your superior's orders, represent the matter to her humbly, yet always in deference to her prudence, that she may act as she shall deem proper. But be her determination what it may, show no chagrin, even if it is against your own opinion. By acting thus, you will never do anything that can diminish the merit of your obedience. Have an equal respect for all your sisters who have any authority over you, and inspire with the same sentiments the young confided to your care.

If the superior whom you shall elect correspond to the favorable idea which you had formed of her, return sincere thanks to God, and think how unworthy you are to receive such a favor from God. If, on the contrary, her manner of administering does not answer your expectations, say in the presence of God you deserve a still more imperfect one; this consideration will turn to the profit of your spiritual advancement. If however, you remark in her, any essential defect or if she should cause any disorder likely

to scandalize your young scholars; in that case you must notify the spiritual Father of the Congregation and humbly lay your troubles before him, in order that in his prudence he may provide for them.

IV. Keep an attentive watch over the conduct of your daughters, and make them render an exact account of their spiritual and temporal wants. Lavish on them all the assistance in your power, and if it should happen that you cannot succor them; have recourse to your protectresses the temporal mothers. Frankly explain to them your indigence, withheld by no fear of appearing importunate. These requests will afford you opportunities of appreciating their kind heartedness and generosity. Yet should it happen that they cannot aid you, notwithstanding their good will, then exhort your daughters to confidence in God and entrust yourselves to his Providence. It is he who founded the Institute, and like a good father, he cannot be slow in coming to its aid.

But if the temporal necessities of your daughters require so great solicitude, what attention should you not pay to the welfare of their soul? Let them render you an account, especially on Sundays and holidays, of the progress which they make in virtue. Lead them forward unceasingly

towards eternal good, inspiring them with a generous contempt for the things of earth. Let them understand well all the advantages of the holy state which they have embraced. Excite them also to persevere, and especially to behave at home as in the presence of the world, with due discretion, humility and modesty; so that they may everywhere appear the faithful servants of Jesus Christ their divine model.

V. The senses being, so to say, the gates of the soul, recommend with all earnestness to your daughters to apply themselves constantly to hold them in check. You will exhort them therefore to sobriety in drinking and eating, reminding them that food is intended to repair our strength, rather than to satisfy our sensual appetites. I say the same thing of sleep, in which we should indulge no longer than a sufficient and necessary repose requires. Habituate them also to speak but rarely, for it is difficult to speak much without being exposed to the danger of committing many faults. Endeavor to make edifying matters the object of your conversation, and let due mildness and modesty be blended with it. Often advise them to exclude any topic likely to lead to a spirit of worldliness or independence. Let the Sisters finally remember, that on entering the congregation they have

renounced the hopes of the world and their own will.

If they observe these things faithfully, they will easily support the contempt of the world, and will practise holy obedience in all humility; they will courageously surmount all difficulties that can arise, either from their own families or from strangers: and God, who witnesses their combat, will not fail to aid and console them. Make your daughters especially appreciate the advantages of Christian union and charity which should constantly reign among them. Be careful that they all have the same rule of life; the same heart; the same will ever conformed to that of Jesus Our Lord. Let them devote themselves for his sake to observe the constitutions punctually, and be so rich in all virtues, that these words of Holy Scripture may be verified in them, "We are the good odor of Christ."

It may happen withal, that some will become discouraged: combine all your efforts then to maintain them in their pristine fervor. Show them how short is the labor here below, when compared with eternal repose. Draw a parallel between the sufferings of this world, and the immortal palms which God prepares for us. Convince them that they should place all their happiness in Jesus Christ, take refuge in him,

take him as their model in all, and aspire to glory as the goal of their zeal and toil.

VI. Endeavor to live and behave so as to edify your daughters. Never fail to practise yourselves what you recommend to them; for, your advice will have little weight, if there is room to remark in you the very faults that you pretend to correct in others. In vain would you try to maintain them in the ways of rectitude, if your precepts are not supported by the ascendency of your example. How, in fact, would you lead them to perfection, if you do not seek to attain it with them? Be their models then in all things, especially in what concerns modesty in dress, innocence of heart, decency in action, the choice of good reading, the frequentation of the sacraments, the purity and brevity of conversations, the frequent exercise of mental prayer, works of charity, fidelity to our rule, in fine, all the exercises of piety that most become the holy state that you have embraced.

VII. Rest assured that you must exercise a constant vigilance over the flock confided to your care, to defend it from the attacks of wolves and robbers. I here distinguish two kinds of enemies equally dangerous; there are vain persons of the world and false religious. You must warn your daughters never to become familiar with

secular women, still less with men, especially the young, versed as they may be, otherwise in spirituality. Experience but proves how dangerous these spiritual ties may become. Be careful too that they do not converse too long with persons of their own sex who live in indolence, for the ordinary topic of conversation with such is the pleasures and vanities of the world. They would insensibly divert your daughters from purity, rob them of the habit and inclination of sobriety, and thus make them fall into remissness. Let them then in general avoid those, who under pretext of friendship or good counsel, would nevertheless be able to turn them aside from the virtues proper to their state; but let them particularly forbear all intercourse with those whose faith is doubtful, for fear that error should penetrate to the very heart of our congregation.

VIII. Love your daughters alike, for they are all children of God. It will often happen that those who at first have appeared less capable to you, will become at last chosen vessels, the instruments of the greatest designs of Providence. As we cannot penetrate the depths of hearts, we should not prefer or reject any. Not that you should accept without distinction all kinds of persons; but, at least, great wisdom

should here be used, for it would be dangerous for the general good to be deceived in so important a choice. Beware then of judging rashly these faithful servants of a God, who as he himself affirms, can from the very stones raise up children to Abraham. Can he not also raise to the highest perfection, the apparently most contemptible of his creatures? Exercise then the greatest indulgence towards them; and when they happen to fail in any thing, rebuke them mildly, correct them with charity, assist them in fine, as much as you can, never swerving from these great obligations and persuading yourselves that heaven will not fail to do the rest.

IX. The last thing which I have to say to you, and which I earnestly commend to you from the bottom of my heart, is to live always in the most perfect harmony, forming only one heart and one soul. Display all your care in drawing more closely the bonds of charity. Love each other with a reciprocal love and bear with each other for the love of Christ, who will live in you, if you live in him and for him. I leave you under the high protection of his holy Mother, under that of the holy angels, the holy apostles and the heavenly court. Love one another; I repeat it, be inseparably united in Our Lord. This is the only means of resisting all tempests,

of braving the efforts of hell. Farewell, my sisters farewell: for I know that I have but little time to live. I leave you to God's Providence; put your confidence in him fully convinced that he will act with you in your holy enterprises, that he will second your pious designs. From him I bless you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Divine wisdom had dictated these counsels. Saint Angela had expressed them in the most concise and edifying terms. Her daughters and the lady governesses felt at this moment the most profound impressions of respect, admiration and grief.

CHAPTER IV.

Hopes of St, Angela's recovery—She makes her will—Appoints the Countess Lucretia Lodronne her successor—Her last words—Her holy death—General veneration for her sanctity.

Hope now suddenly dawned in the minds of the Ursulines breaking through the dark thoughts that had enveloped their minds, for Saint Angela had sat up in her bed of pain to listen to the perusal of the last counsels which she gave the officers and directresses of the or-

der, determined to repeat them, which she did in so firm a voice, that, although she announced her last end, they could not persuade themselves, that this malady was to be her last. Her loving daughters left her then, after testifying their gratitude, feeling the more assured as to her condition, inasmuch as the physician also agreed that there was every ground for hope.

Saint Angela did not share this opinion, although the remedies appeared to afford her some relief; she wished to make her spiritual will which she also dictated to her secretary. Meanwhile the Countess of Lodronne and the other lady governesses who visited her daily could not realise the fact that the disease was making rapid progress. They were not a little surprised to learn, that their Mother, feeling worse, summoned them to her side. It was in this conference that she declared it to be her will, that on her death Lucretia, Countess of Lodronne, should succeed her as Superior. All promised it shedding tears. Lucretia herself could not resist the repeated entreaties of the foundress who at the same time handed her her will, begging her to make known the contents to her daughters after her obsequies. "They will now more than ever," she added, "need your counsel and your example. Continue to

show them the goodness that you have thus far testified, treat them as your children and rest assured that heaven which so visibly protects our Society will bless it still more. Be tranquil as to my situation which seems to alarm you. Take care that my daughters continue the exercise of their functions. Be pleased also to tell Signora Catharine Meja from this day forth join in maintaining order. I have chosen her to succeed Lucretia in the office of governess. You know her piety. I have received her promises, and am persuaded that she will use every effort for the prosperity of the congregation."

Angela was too universally respected for her intentions to be overlooked. Every religious went that day to their ordinary occupations: they felt the more assured because they heard towards evening that she sent those in attendance on her to hear the usual sermon. She had had her views in taking these precautions; knowing that it was usual to wash the body before interring it, this ceremony, respectful as it was, alarmed her modesty, and she resolved to render to herself this duty to spare her virginal body the shame of being uncovered, even after death.

No sooner was she alone, than without a moment's loss of time, she rallied all her strength,

got out of bed and in a little while executed her strange resolution. So well were her measures taken to conceal from all human knowledge this trait of heroism, that no one could have been aware of it without a special attention of heaven, decreeing doubtless, that it should be unveiled to add to the glory of the humble Virgin.

The preacher was going to close his discourse, when he suddenly felt seized by a divine inspiration; he commended Mother Angela to the prayers of his auditors, announcing that her last moment was at hand. Several persons immediately left the Church to hasten to her bedside. One of her nephews was the first who arrived. His aunt seemed surprised; but he was perfectly amazed to find her dressing. "God be praised," said he, "you do not seem to me so bad as the preacher has just announced."—"Yet he spoke truly," she rejoined, "for I expect to go forth to meet Our Lord this night." She was still speaking when her attendants and a great number of ladies entering, she asked to be put back in bed. The physician who arrived almost at the same time, was not long in perceiving that the weakness was extraordinary, and deeming all further hope baseless, he spoke openly. "I had told you, sir," she replied, "that this was to be my last illness: you now speak without disguise,

and I thank you: for this news is most consoling, to me, too happy to behold the moment come that is to unite me to my Creator for all eternity." The humble virgin of the Lord had already asked for Holy Viaticum. It is easy to comprehend, by all that we have said as to her tender piety, with what fervor she received the last sacraments. After this solemn act of religion, she besought her daughters to remain a moment by her. "As my strength still permits it," said she, "I cannot at this moment, refuse you some words of edification. You see me then, dear daughters, about to leave this earth to enter heaven, where I hope I am awaited by the chaste Spouse of our souls. You know what he has done for us. Be faithful to him to the last extremity, conceive a salutary fear of his judgments, accomplish our holy rules with punctuality; preserve, above all, humility and obedience, and maintain perfect union among yourselves. Live like the wise virgins in the Gospel, this is the surest means of at last reclining at the marriage feast of the spotless lamb. God knows, my daughters, how often I have asked these graces for you. I feel a confidence that he will vouchsafe to grant them as a reward for my prayers and the zeal for your sanctification which has ever animated me. Yes, my dear

daughters, I hope that the God of all goodness will regard the maternal tenderness which I have ever constantly borne you. It is in this quality of mother that you now claim my benediction. O my Jesus, do thou thyself bless a Society of virgins so devoted to thee, grant that increasing in number, they may still more increase in grace, in fervor, in virtue, before Thee, and before the eyes of men!"

All present were plunged into the bitterest desolation. Nothing was heard but sobs and touching lamentations. The venerable foundress, who felt her strength forsaking her, besought her sisters to withdraw and give her time to compose herself. Scarcely had they departed; when Angela had herself attired in her habit of the third order of Saint Francis, wishing it to serve as her shroud. From that moment her thoughts were but of heaven. She was heard to murmur acts of faith, hope and charity. "Yes, my God," she said, "I love thee, can I not at this last moment, love thee still more. Ye heavenly tribes, and thou especially O holy Virgin, mother of pure love, inspire me with your sentiments, in order that I may love Jesus as thou lovest him! How long, O my God, shall I remain far from thee?—Who will give me the wings of a dove to fly to my Beloved? : :

Break, O Lord, the prison of this earthly body; deign to receive this soul which languishes far from thee!"

Thus did this happy soul elect, prepare for death. Her patience in suffering was admirable. While her features became unrecognizable, her soul preserved the same candor, the same tranquillity. Slight convulsions being perceptible, her daughters were called in, and prostrate around her, they recited the prayers of the agonizing. But lo! while they prayed, they suddenly perceived a ray of light re-animating the features of the dying Saint. Her eyes lit up by this prodigy, shone with a supernatural splendor, and at the same time, a wonderous tranquillity, had succeeded the agitation, which a few moments before, made her body and every nerve in it quiver. One would have supposed her in a state of contemplation, about to resume her strength and return to life.

But the hour had come when the Lord was to crown his faithful hand-maid. She died calmly on the night of the 27–28 January, 1540, while pronouncing the holy name of Jesus. She was in the sixty-seventh year of her age, five years after founding her order. Thus soared to the bosom of God this earthly Angel who breathed but for Him.

The veneration entertained for her in the whole country increased when she had ceased to live. There was a general mourning in the dwellings of Brescia. The whole city talked of the loss which they had just experienced. The poor especially long regretted a mother who combined instruction with every succor that could tend to alleviate the weight of their misery.

At the moment when they were preparing for her funeral, a dispute arose between the Canons of the Cathedral and those of Saint John Lateran. The former pretended that the right to inter Mother Angela belonged to them, as the oratory which had constituted her chief abode was in the precincts of their cloister. The others opposed it, on the ground that the Saint had expired in a house to which she had retired more than a year before, and which lay in the parish of Saint Afra, within their jurisdiction. Both showed themselves extremely jealous of possessing so precious a treasure. This contest, moreover, which honored the parties, not being one to be decided at once, a sentence was obtained from the diocesan court, that the body should be temporarily deposited in one of the crypts of the church of Saint Afra. It remained there thirty days attired in the habit of the third order, the

the face uncovered. It was afterwards seen that God had permitted this incident only to display more clearly his servant's glory; for two miracles soon confirmed the opinion entertained of her Sanctity.

Many days elapsed without their remarking any sign of corruption in the body. Every limb preserved a perfect flexibility. The features of her countenance did not change. There all admired that serenity, that amiable candor that Saint Angela had ever had in her life-time. Far from exhaling any disagreeable odor, her garments breathed a kind of perfume that inspired no less piety than admiration. "Her body," says the bull of her Canonization, "which for thirty days remained unburied, preserved its flexibility with all the appearance of a living body."

Another prodigy which took place at the same time, also made a lively impression on men's minds. For three consecutive nights, an extraordinary light was observed in the middle region of the air, hovering over the subterranean chapel where the body lay. The whole city witnessed this phenomenon. The faithful of all conditions began to bless heaven, and none doubted but that God had crowned her whom all so commonly styled *Blessed.*

Meanwhile the litigation as to the place of her burial was actively carried on. On the pre-

texts more or less plausible produced on either side, the official rendered a definitive sentence, by which he declared that the funeral of Angela Merici should be celebrated by the Canons of St. John Lateran, as parish priests of the church of Saint Afra which was her parish church, and that her body should be interred in a subterranean chapel. This judgment was sanctioned by the applause of the faithful. The next day they proceeded to the ceremony of her obsequies, which were performed with extraordinary pomp. Besides the numerous attendance of clergy, the nobility wished to take part in the solemnity, and the people flocked in not only from Brescia, but from Desenzano, and all the neighboring parishes and towns. When the funeral service had closed, the body was conveyed to the subterranean chapel, and laid in the tomb which the daughters of Saint Ursula had opened on the right hand side of the Altar. It was so constructed that it could be opened to satisfy the piety of the faithful. Various inscriptions, given at length in the chronicles of the order, were engraved on a marble slab that covered the vault. They testify how great a veneration prevailed from the very first among the people for the lifeless remains of the illustrious virgin of Desenzano.

They drew, in fact, a crowd of pilgrims who

came from all parts of Italy. History speaks of a station made there by a pious ecclesiastic attended by a young stranger, who, at first, began to read the inscriptions that had been engraved on the sepulchral stone. His rich imagination was pleased with its elegance and happy turn of expression: but convinced that the authors had, as is usual in epitaphs, recourse to exaggeration, he exclaimed to the ecclesiastic: "These are very pompous eulogiums, do you think that all this can be true?" Scarcely had he uttered these words when he heard, twice successively, an extraordinary noise proceeding from the tomb, a noise that echoed through the church above. One of the religious, who was at that moment reciting his breviary there, descended into the crypt immediately, and finding the two pilgrims near the tomb, he asked them in alarm what was the cause of the noise which he had just heard. "It was I," said the youthful stranger, in an accent that showed the liveliest emotion, "my incredulity caused the noise that reached your ears." At the same time he prostrated himself before the sepulchre, bursting forth into tears and thanking God for having, while punishing him, infused such light into his soul. On leaving the church, he everywhere related the miraculous event which was soon known through the whole province.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

Consternation of the Ursulines after the death of Saint Angela—The Countess of Lodronne, second superior of the order, reads publicly the will of Saint Angela—The provisions of this Testament.

The death of Saint Angela had plunged her daughters in discouragement and consternation. They considered themselves a flock without a shepherd; and while the whole Heavenly Court welcomed her to the abode of glory, confusion had taken the place of order in the bosom of the Society which she had founded. The exercises of the classes and the other functions of the Institute, were interrupted during these days of grief. No one felt courage to meet the rest, and continue the labors to which they had been habituated for years. Providence designed however to perpetuate this congregation, and would not suffer it to expire thus in its cradle. The wise Countess of Lodronne, whom Saint Angela

had named as her successor, put an end to this state of things; she invited the sisters to meet, and agreed with them on a day, when a chapter should be had to consider the actual state of the Institute. The voice of so eminent a lady was hearkened to by all the sisters; they came forth as from a profound sleep. They felt that God would not leave them orphans. Having corresponded cordially to this appeal, they were addressed by the Countess as follows, in presence of the other governesses of the order.

" We have just, my sisters, sustained a great loss, which I feel more intensely than any other, on account of the close bonds which united me to our common Mother. Yet we cannot any longer, without becoming guilty, continue to mourn and lament. God wished to call to him a soul that was his. No more, alas, shall we behold that tender mother preside at our meetings. No more shall we enjoy those touching instructions, which charming our minds, animated us with the liveliest zeal. Let us be consoled however, my Sisters, for she who is no longer with us here below, lives in heaven to protect us. What do I say ? she will live forever on earth by the example which she has left, by the sublime lessons which she has given, by the counsels which she addressed to us especially,

and still more by her spiritual testament, destined to remind her daughters constantly, of the duties of their holy state, and the tender solicitude which she evinced for them till her death. Behold, my dear Sisters, this precious gift, just as she confided it to me, exacting a promise on my part not to make it known till after her burial. The time has come to fulfil this engagement, and for this reason I have begged you to assemble here. It is necessary also to know what steps you will follow under the circumstances in which this advent has placed you. Listen then to your mother, she will impart to you her last will. May we all engrave them deep in our hearts." After this consoling discourse Lucretia called in Gabriel Corzano, the secretary of the holy foundress, and placed in his hands the will which he read aloud as follows:

Testament of Angela Merici unworthy servant of Christ.

"I, Sister Angela, unworthy servant of Christ. May Almighty God grant you his eternal benediction, especially to you noble Countess Lucretia de Lodronne, principal mother of the Society of Saint Ursula; and to you illustrious ladies, Genevieve de Luzaga, Mary Davogrado,

Veronica de Buzza, Ursula de Gavarda, Jane del Monte, Isabel de Prata, Eleanora de Pedezzora and Catharine Meja. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"God has wished, my dear Mother and Sisters to withdraw from the vanities of the world, a great number of pious women and particularly the young virgins of our congregation. What leads me to admire in this especially, his infinite mercy, is that he has designed to employ me, unworthy as I am, to be his instrument in the execution of so great a design. To his incomparable bounty do I owe the light and graces wherewith I was favored, and which I needed for the accomplishment of his adorable will. He has made use of me to provide for all your wants, and especially for the spiritual aid which I desired to afford you to confirm you in the holy state to which you have been called.

But one of the most essential graces that I have received of him, is to have inspired you with the generous project of seconding me. No one was worthier than you to be the spiritual mothers of our institute, I was not deceived in my expectations, for not only have you adopted this family, now precious before God, but you cherish all the members, as so many children of your own. Consider then, I pray you, consider

the nobility of your vocation, how honorable it is for you to have been chosen by God himself to direct so many virgins, chaste spouses of Christ. But the more this preference requires you to render him the sincerest thanksgiving, the more should you pray Him to enable you to consummate a work so well begun. Abandon yourselves then generously to Him, put a boundless confidence in Him, prepare to support every event for his love and with a submission that nothing can shake. I conjure you, especially in the name of Jesus Christ, and by the merits of his bitter passion, to practise exactly the salutary counsels that I am about to give you. These are the last wills that he has inspired me with for his glory and your advantage. Regard them as so many spiritual legacies which I make out of attachment to you, and which I leave you as a most precious inheritance. Such are the last proofs of my love for you; I recommend, by all that you hold dearest, the execution of this my last will.

"I. *Legacy.* I ask my dear Mother and Sisters in Christ, that your intentions in the accomplishment of your duties, be so pure, that you exclude every other object in your actions, but God's glory and the salvation of souls. Your works will then flow from charity as their prin-

ciple, and will necessarily produce happy fruit. For as Our Lord says expressly, the good tree, that is, the heart, inflamed with the sweet flames of charity, can bear only holy works, fruits of life.

"II. *Legacy.* Be careful to engrave deeply in your memory not only the name and condition of your daughters, but also their natural qualities and disposition. If you really love them, this study will not be difficult; for experience daily teaches us that natural mothers are constantly occupied with their children; that they keep them ever in their mind. Their solicitude increases in proportion to the number who are to share it. The care of spiritual mothers, should be still more continual, inasmuch as the bonds of charity are more perfect than those of blood. Love your daughters then, my dearest mothers, treat them with that gentleness and humility of heart which our Saviour so earnestly recommended by word and by example. Does He not also assure us that his yoke is sweet and his burden light?

"III. *Legacy.* Conduct your daughters with mildness and moderation; let rigor and severe measures be unknown among you. Keep ever before your mind the characteristics of charity which are patience, benignity, modesty, affability, beneficence. Our divine Master was meek

and humble of heart, and Providence governs men and directs events only with moderation. Make these maxims the rule of your conduct. Yet do not imagine that I wish to proscribe the lawful use of your authority; for should one of your daughters abuse this gentle government and deserve reproach, then it will be your duty to employ severe measures, proportioning them to the places, condition and quality of the person; provided that zeal and charity be ever the rule and source.

"IV. *Legacy.* Be careful, dear Mothers, to inspire your daughters with the courage which they will need to practise the virtues, without which they cannot please Christ, whom in their religious profession, they took for their spouse. Let them above all, devote their attention to the observance of the duties of the most perfect purity. Take care that their manners be decent and ordered with propriety. Consider yourselves here too as ordinary mothers, take them as models; you will notice how they strive to give their daughters an education best suited to their state. They form them to the tone and manners of the world, that they may assume the rank which they are intended to occupy. They glory in rearing them well, and make it a merit among men. So, dear Mothers, should you act

with your spiritual daughters. They are not destined, indeed, to please the world, but the eternal Son of God intends them as his spouses, and he it is who has committed to you the care of rendering them so perfect as to be worthy of him. Think then, I repeat, of the greatness and nobility of your vocation. As Providence has placed you at the head of so many Virgins, devote all your care to form them for the King of kings. Your mission will be truly enviable, and laboring thus for God's glory you will be happy in this world and filled with glory for all eternity.

"V. *Legacy.* Should any of your daughters unhappily fall into any considerable fault, warn her several times with a charity full of tenderness and solicitude; but if she remain insensible to your warnings, cease to speak to her for some time, abandoning her in some sort to herself, and letting her understand that she no longer belongs to the community. If you take care to make her feel this kind of abandonment sensibly, it will often happen, that given up thus to herself, she will make wholesome reflections, that will lead her to repent of her faults, and will excite a new fervor in her. When she returns you will welcome her with goodness. She will repair, in presence of her fellow sisters, the

scandal caused; she shall ask pardon in private of the mother directresses appointed to warn her. She will submit, besides, to the penance which the spiritual father of the house shall impose, that is to say, to fast one Friday on bread and water.

"VI. *Legacy.* Should you perceive that any one of the younger sisters preserves too much attachment to the vanities of the world, or other trifles, which especially in a religious are real follies; do not conceive any great hopes of her. Presume on the contrary, that she will have great difficulty in persevering in her vocation. If she refuses, in fact, to accept slight sacrifices, how could she habituate herself to make greater ones every day in the religious state. Yet treat her with great prudence and charity: for these are temptations, that God will give her grace to overcome, if she makes never so little effort to overcome herself; and when she once succeeds, she will be able with like success to surmount all other obstacles, and thus fulfil her duties with facility, perhaps even with more fruit for her salvation.

"VII. *Legacy.* Never omit to meet at least once a month, in order to consult those in charge on the affairs of the congregation, to examine thoroughly the administration, and to receive

an account of the conduct of all your daughters: as well as of their temporal and spiritual wants. These private meetings will be of incalculable service in enabling you to provide for every thing, as necessity, prudence, and the spirit of God shall inspire.

"VIII. *Legacy.* Take care also to assemble all your daughters from time to time, to enable them to hear some instructions touching their duties. Choose for this a virtuous and enlightened priest; who may by his exhortations and good example, cement the union that should reign among you; consoling some, encouraging others to pursue the path of virtue and thus tend to perfection. For it is a great consolation for man, said Saint Ambrose, to have a trustworthy person to whom he can open his heart and communicate his secrets and his troubles. "I advise you then," adds this holy doctor, "to choose a wise friend, who may felicitate you in prosperity, console you in adversity, counsel you in perplexity." "Nothing is more consoling," said Saint Augustine in like manner, "nothing is more consoling than the outpouring of hearts between true friends; but there can be no slow friendship, no durable society unless cemented by charity."

"IX. *Legacy.* God seems to have approved

as useful our possessing some temporal goods, since Providence has already concurred in bestowing them upon us. Administer these goods as real mothers, and put them to use so as to be useful to the increase of the community. It will devolve chiefly on you, illustrious Countess, to regulate all affairs of this nature. I confide them to your wisdom: but do nothing of importance, without taking the advice of the spiritual Father of the Society. In difficult cases consult also the protectors to whom I have confided the temporal interests, in order that your enterprises may not fail to be advantageous to your dear daughters: either to encourage those who have already entered the Congregation, or to stimulate others, whom God has inspired with the same vocation.

"X. *Legacy.* The precept of alms is common to all Christians; but is more especially obligatory on persons consecrated to God. Give alms then, dear Mothers, according to your means, and never fail to render your neighbor the services that may depend on you. The most direct path that leads us to God is undoubtedly that of the works of mercy. It is also a very efficacious means for recalling sinners, for very frequently only a good work is needed to preserve or withdraw a host of souls from vice or to lead

a neighbor to a better life. Alms is a pious stratagem whereby we buy souls. Hereby we place the poor in a kind of necessity to labor for their salvation. Be faithful then to these principles, and with the aid of grace you will thus do much good.

"XI. *Legacy.* In the direction of your beloved daughters, display all the vigilance and solicitude that the Divine Pastor of souls has a right to expect from you. Take care to afford them the apparently most trifling satisfaction: keep off from this faithful flock, all that can trouble its peace or happy harmony. You will thus prevent all kinds of discord; you will foreclose all scandals. But watch especially, watch scrupulously, over their manner of thinking; in order to preserve them in the unhappy times of error in which we live, from every dangerous or suspicious opinion in matters of faith. As you know, the enemy of salvation now prowls more than ever around the fold of the sovereign Shepherd. Wo to the imprudent sheep who expose themselves to fall into the snares of the demon of heresy. Give this your most untiring attention, and if you do so, there will never be in our Institute but one faith, one will, one heart, as there was among the first Christians. If perfect unity of faith reigns among you, the

purest charity and most happy understanding will be observed between you and your daughters. What more efficacious means of securing to yourselves the protection of the Saviour of men! Your mutual love will be a guarantee of the perpetuity of his grace and a sure pledge to him of your fidelity: "If you love one another," says he, "the world shall know that you are my disciples." John xii.

"XII. *Legacy.* Your fidelity to God therefore depends on your union among yourselves. Observe the great precept of charity I conjure you. Be ever on your guard against the angel of darkness, who will infallibly seek to seduce you under specious pretexts and fine appearances. When then you perceive the least division, apply without delay the most efficacious remedies. Arrange for this purpose with the spiritual Father of the community, and then employ the useful means which heaven will not fail to inspire, as soon as you are assembled in his name. You will thus extirpate the evil by the root, and there will remain no leaven of discord among you, that pest of society, which would end by speedily producing the entire ruin of our Institute; for as Our Saviour says: "Every kingdom divided against itself shall fall."

"XIII. *Legacy.* I finally desire you, dear

Mothers and Sisters, to remain inviolably attached to what God's grace has inspired me to prescribe; particularly all the points of the rule. Times and circumstances may arrive which will require some change. Make none without sage counsel and mature deliberation. Never forget to recur to Jesus in your necessities, and do so with implicit confidence. Often prostrate yourselves with your daughters at the foot of the cross. Offer this divine spouse your prayers and tears. He himself will deign to console you, instruct you, and grant your vows. Since Providence has deigned to protect this rising society; rest assured that he will not forsake it, as long as its object is God's service and glory.

"*Conclusion.* If you remain faithful in the observance of the instructions just given you, and if you follow the inspirations, that it will please the Lord to communicate to you according to your need, and the various circumstances in which you are placed, what joy will then reign among you? what reward may you not expect? What inexpressible consolation in fact to feel that we shall one day all live united in heaven! Banish all sadness therefore from your hearts; you need fear neither danger nor obstacles, be they what they may, as long as you can rely on Our Saviour's support. His grace will sustain

you till your latest sigh. Put all your confidence in him: be inviolably attached to him: and receive, dear Mothers and Sisters, the kiss of peace which I give you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER II.

The address of the Countess Lucretia—Her election as Superior of the Society—Her piety and ability—Confirmation of the order by Pope Paul III. in 1544—*The Ursulines assume a particular habit—Spread of the order—They acquire the church of St. Bridget—Death of the Countess.*

After reading the will of Saint Angela, the Countess Lucretia de Lodronne again addressed the assembled ladies and sisters.

"You can no longer," said she, "be ignorant of the last intentions of our venerable Mother. You have remarked that they concern me particularly, as well as the Lady protectresses of our Institute: but they no less interest us on various subjects. Tell us now without any disguise, whether you are disposed to receive our services, and whether we can count on the con-

tinuance of yours. It would be useless for us to take in hand the reins of administration, if you think of presenting the slightest obstacle; or if any one of you should refuse to enter into our views for your spiritual and temporal welfare. I have subscribed to those expressed by our foundress, only on the condition that you do. The weight of the superiority is far beyond my strength. I recoil when I think of the duties it imposes on me, and I am convinced that any other of the lady protectresses is more fit than I to fill the office. Yet I will accept it for God's greater glory, if such are your intentions; but I desire that your suffrages be unanimous, for on this concert depends the happiness and stability of the congregation. You know my dear Sisters, that the world is full of evil spirits who labor for its destruction. If we remain firmly united, we shall disconcert these projects. Examine then in God's presence; and then take such steps as shall seem most suited to your interests."

The Countess, with the other lady protectresses, then rose to leave the meeting, in order to give the sisters full liberty in offering their suffrages, but the sisters crowded around to prevent their going. "What do you mean?" cried all these holy virgins. "Can we stop to de-

liberate, when our holy foundress herself has made the choice? Have we ever had any will but hers? Yes, most illustrious countess, you shall be our superior and principal Mother. These virtuous ladies to whom we already owe so much, will surely aid you by their counsels. We confide entirely in their wisdom and yours, and are ready to obey whatever it shall please you to order. You will ever find in us submissive and respectful children."

The community could not take a better resolution. The Bishop of Brescia unhesitatingly ratified a choice which he believed marked by the seal of divine Providence. The noble countess united in fact all the qualities desirable for the continuance of Saint Angela's work. To eminent piety she added all that can contribute to form a noble character, and to a distinguished education, a remarkable talent for administration. She moreover enjoyed the highest consideration of the whole city. Her birth, her personal qualities and her fortune, had brought her into relation with neighboring princes. The veneration which she had conceived for Saint Angela could alone induce her to assume the office of Superior. In its discharge she distinguished herself by the activity which she displayed in defending the congregation against seculars who made

every effort to stifle it in its origin. Fathers endeavored to divert their daughters from the religious state which they had embraced; but Lucretia soon discovered these little plots. Encouraged by the bishop and the magistrates, sustained by the ladies' governesses, and sure too of the good spirit which animated the great majority of the religious, she brought them all back to their first engagements, and maintained them in union, fervor and regularity. Animated with a new zeal for their neighbors' salvation, they continued to visit prisoners, to console the poor, exhort sinners to repentance, and conduct public shools. It could scarcely be discerned that they had changed their superior. The conferences on Christian doctrine were continued, and every Sunday they assembled in Saint Angela's oratory to give an account of the labors of the week.

Then it was the world itself began to do justice to the Congregation of Saint Ursula. Men ceased to assail a society of virgins who had in view only the public good. The harmony which reigned between them and their superior gained them universal good will. Lucretia had the consolation of receiving a great number of novices, and then it was that she thought of forming a new establishment at Desenzano.

She wished to honor Saint Angela's birth place, and to replace her old associate in conformity with her own often repeated wishes.

Before putting this project in execution, the pious Countess wished to renew the petition addressed by Saint Angela to the Holy See, for the confirmation of the institute. Gabriel Cozzano had preserved all the documents: they were submitted to the examination of the Cardinal Bishop of Brescia who forwarded them to Rome with a favorable recommendation. The chair of Peter was then occupied by Pope Paul III., who had just four years before, in 1540, approved the society of Jesus, devoted to the instruction of youth. He earnestly welcomed a petition relative to the foundation of an order nearly similar for the education of girls. The rule and constitutions drawn up by Saint Angela, whom he had seen at Rome during the Jubilee of 1525, seemed to him impressed with a spirit of wisdom and forecast that excited his admiration. He attested the satisfaction which he felt to see arising, on the field of the Church, the spiritual vine which was to produce so many virgins to Jesus Christ; and after deliberating on it with the Sacred College, the Head of the Church published on the 4th of June, 1544, a bull by which he confirmed the new order under the

name of the Company of Saint Ursula. He there declares that this society is canonically instituted, and grants to each Ursuline, present and future, a plenary indulgence on the day of their profession, and at the hour of death. It would be impossible to express the joy experienced by Lucretia on receiving this bull confirmatory of her congregation. With her daughters she blessed heaven, and took this occasion to assemble them in order to confer on the necessity of assuming the religious habit; but as this needed the concurrence of the ecclesiastical authority, nothing was decided in this first conference. Two years after, a decree was passed to regulate the costume which has been worn ever since, never having undergone more than unessential modifications.

The pomp displayed on the ceremonies of giving the habit and making profession, were a subject of emulation for the postulants. God poured forth his blessings on the new order which increased considerably in the number of its professed. Then it was that they proceeded to disseminate the order through the neighboring cities and parishes.

The community continued to assemble in Saint Angela's oratory, which had been converted into a chapel; but this locality having become too

small, they had to think of procuring a church. This was the last act of the Countess of Lodronne. She made arrangements with the bishop of Brescia to acquire the Church of Saint Bridget, of which the Ursulines took possession in the course of the year 1556. Here the community elected a new Superior in the presence of two ecclesiastics appointed for that purpose by the bishop. This pious prelate died in 1559, and was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. Dominic Pollani, to whom the Ursulines were already under many obligations. Immediately after taking possession of his See, he declared himself their protector, and confided the direction of the Society to Don Francis Cabrino d' Alfianello, who had just founded the congregation of Fathers of Peace. The respect that he preserved for Saint Angela gave him an interest in this new duty. He daily celebrated the holy sacrifice of the Mass in the Church of Saint Bridget, and heard the confession of the religious. He also presided at their meetings and gave the spiritual conferences. The institute was indebted to him for a great number of excellent subjects, who subsequently bore to other provinces the spirit and reputation of Saint Angela. He was still directing the Congregation, when in 1568, an establishment was founded at Milan.

CHAPTER III.

Saint Charles Borromeo and the Society of Saint Ursula—Establishment of the Congregation of Milan—They become cloistered—Saint Charles, Visitor General of the order—Acquires the church and priory of Saint Benedict for the order—Regulations introduced by him—Establishments in his diocese—His death—Congregation of the order at Parma, Foligny, Venice, Cremona, Verona, Veltri, Genoa and Rome.

Saint Charles Borromeo, who had a few years before, in 1560, so happily brought to a close the council of Trent, left Rome and all the dignities which he occupied there, in order to devote himself exclusively to the administration of his diocese. He had been welcomed in the metropolitan city, with the respect due to his eminent ability and shining virtues. Full of veneration for Saint Angela, he wrote to the Bishop of Brescia to impart his earnest desire of establishing a congregation of religious of her order in Milan. Twelve sisters were sent him. The holy Archbishop welcomed them with

kindness, and placed them under his protection. Ere long they conquered the general esteem by their solid piety, their excellent method of instruction, and the success which attended it. Thus far the sisters had not lived in community; they assembled on certain days in the house of the Mother Superior to receive her instructions. Saint Charles sometimes attended these meetings to aid the congregation by his counsels and to excite them to persevere. "Remember your origin," he would say, "follow the traces of your Sisters of Brescia. There did the venerable Mother Angela plant the tree of life which produces such precious fruit. Show yourselves here the fruitful branches, and continue to render yourselves worthy of the glorious name which you bear."

When the illustrious prelate had by this means gained the confidence of the Sisters, he without difficulty induced them to live in community. At his request Pope Gregory XIII. issued a brief, in 1572, by which he confirmed the institute of Mother Angela Merici, and authorized her daughters to live in congregation. He moreover permitted them to form similar establishments whereever they shall be requested. From this time the Ursulines of Milan taught only in the common house, and lived there in

cloister, going out only by leave of the mother Superior. But four years after they crossed the threshold of their cloister to fly with Saint Charles to the assistance of the plague-stricken. They were found in every section of the city, nursing the sick, burying the dead, devoting themselves to all good works that Christian charity can inspire, under such deplorable circumstances. They thus acquired the confidence of families, who would afterwards have no other instructresses for their daughters. The order of Saint Ursula needed a Visitor General apostolical. This institution became the more necessary as the family of Saint Angela had received very great increase. Saint Charles having been entreated to request it of the holy See, was himself selected by Pope Gregory XIII. for this important place. He visited the mother house in 1580: the city of Brescia received him with the honors due to his character and his eminent virtue. They ceded to him, for the Ursulines, the Church and priory of Saint Benedict. It was, at that time, a benefice possessed by Count Arcanius de Martinengue, a relative of William, whom Saint Angela had reconciled in so extraordinary a manner.

The Congregation of Brescia then contained several novices, who were about to pronounce

their vows, Saint Charles presided at this ceremony which was performed at the Cathedral with great pomp. All the religious in the habit of the order had the happiness of receiving from his hand.

On returning from Milan, the holy archbishop issued a decree, which was to apply alike to the two primitive congregations. Among other things it directed that the daughters of Saint Ursula should remain subject to the jurisdiction of the bishops, wherever they might establish communities.

The order extended more and more every year! cities were emulous of obtaining such able instructresses for the young. These foundations were made the more easily as the religious everywhere bore the same disinterestedness; asking only what was strictly necessary, and even that was often wanting. Every town of any importance in the Milanese, was thus endowed in a short time with a house of these holy virgins, so that that of Milan was regarded as the second province or primitive congregation of the order of Saint Ursula. This was the work of Saint Charles Borromeo. His premature death which occurred on the 11th of November, 1584, caused great grief in these communities. From the time of his canonization in

1610, many houses of Ursulines have celebrated his feast as a solemn one, on account of the protection with which he had honored the order, as well as for the perfect instructions which he had left it.

About 1595, a new congregation was established at Parma, under the protection of Ranucio Farnese, who was then duke. This prince spared no exertion to establish this foundation on a firm footing, and render it useful to his subjects. He composed it of noble virgins, who, at a later date, founded that of Piacenza.

The house at Foligny, in the diocese of Spoleto, owes its origin to the celebrated Paula, of Foligny. A faithful imitator of Saint Angela, she was inspired by God to found in her own city, a congregation of the order. The learned Cardinal Baronius, in concert with the Bishop of Foligny, examined the constitutions. Paula of Foligny, who was named Superior, was soon at the head of fifty sisters, all animated with a holy rivalry to advance God's glory. After the example of those of Brescia, Milan, and Parma, the sisters of Foligny devoted themselves to instructing girls in reading, writing, and catechism. Their particular constitutions require them to direct the inten-

tion of their prayers to the spiritual good of the Church, and of the monastic orders.

Pope Urban VIII. employed Paula of Foligny to found another establishment at Vescia, a little town of the same diocese. Thither she bore with her the spirit of Saint Angela, whom she had adopted as her model in all things. After having thus imitated her in her works, and especially in her penitential life, she merited to die like her the death of the just, July 20th, 1647, in the seventy-sixth year of her age.

We have seen that Saint Angela, on her return from Jerusalem, had been earnestly requested to stay in Venice. When they learned that she had effected the enterprise which she then meditated, according to God's promises, they solicited a congregation of Ursulines, which was no sooner established, than it drew on it the consideration of all the inhabitants of that republic.

The city of Cremona, where Saint Angela was so well-known, in consequence of the stay which she had made there during the wars of Italy, learning the miracles wrought at her tomb, and the progress of her institute, wished also to enjoy the advantages of a congregation of Ursulines. The house of Cremona, founded

in 1565, and approved by Popes Gregory XIII. and Clement VIII., has produced many religious of eminent virtue.

Verona, situated in the States of Venice, not far from Desenzano, had also its congregation, established apparently, shortly after the death of Saint Angela.

Feltri, an episcopal see, like Verona, situated in the same states, was endowed with a similar institution, a few years after the principal foundation.

The Ursulines established at Genoa, about 1573, had for their foundress Mother Venarcia, who governed the congregation for sixty years. Although she received no primary education, she composed four volumes of spirituality. The senate of Genoa had conceived so high an idea of her virtues, that they undertook the process of her canonization soon after her death which took place in 1633.

The congregation of Saint Ruffina and Saint Secunda at Rome, the foundation of which dates from 1601, owes its commencement to two foreign ladies, one from Paris, the other from Flanders. The former, Frances de Montjoux, went to Italy, intending to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but Pope Clement VIII. diverted her from a voyage that seemed incom-

patible with her delicate situation, and would moreover expose her to serious danger. He furnished her an isolated house in Rome, where she devoted herself to the rigors of penance, wearing the habit of the Poor Clares, which she had assumed before leaving France.

The second lady, Frances de Gorercy, of an illustrious house in Flanders, having become a widow at an early age, and being fatherless and motherless, resolved to leave her own land, and repaired at first to Cologne, where she spent several years unknown to all but God, laboring for her support, and giving all the surplus to the poor. Having gone to Rome, to gain the jubilee of 1600, she lodged like other pilgrims at the hospital of San-Sisto. Her confessor, who was not long in discovering her merit, spoke to her of Sister Montjoux, as an amiable virgin. No sooner were these two holy souls acquainted, than they resolved to lead a common life. Their conversation turning one day on the good done in Italy by the ministry of the Ursulines, they were at the same time surprised that an institute so eminently useful to the young, had not been introduced at Rome. In this way, God inspired them with the idea of commencing the work. Clement VIII. encouraged them; they employed their patrimony in the acquisi-

tion of ground large enough to receive the necessary buildings, and persons desirous of forwarding the good work, aided them in the enterprise. The next year they received novices of every rank, to whom they gave the name of Ursulines. It happened soon after that Pope Paul V. united the parish of Saint Ruffina and Saint Secunda to that of Santa Maria-transtevere. The church, thus rendered in a manner useless, was given to the Ursulines by the sovereign Pontiff. Mother Montjoux died in 1628, and her associate in the foundation, who survived till 1641, saw the most holy fervor reigning in her numerous community.

Such was the prodigious increase which the order, founded by Saint Angela, acquired in Italy. We shall now see it penetrate into France, where it will bear, as in every other place where it has since been propagated, seeds of virtue, and produce the fruit of purest doctrine.

CHAPTER IV.

Extension of the order of Saint Ursula in France—Mother Frances de Bermont—Congregation of Avignon—Devotion to Saint Angela—Her beatification by Pope Pius VI.—She is canonized by Pope Pius VII.

The little town of L'Isle in the County of Vienne, not far from Avignon, was the first in France to possess a house of Ursulines. This establishment was founded in 1596, by Frances de Bermont, who was raised up by God to extend on the soil of France, and in other parts of Europe, the glory of Saint Angela, till then concentrated in the limits of Italy. Gifted with the happiest qualities of mind and heart, Madamoiselle de Bermont had, at the age of twelve, composed a poem which was deemed worthy of publication. But a few years later, she renounced the enjoyments which literature offered her rich imagination, in order to give herself entirely to God. While still young, she was seen associating with herself some ladies of Avignon, her native place, to form a congregation of Ursulines. They began by gathering at their respective houses, the children of the poor and of the working-classes. The whole city ap-

plauded the devotedness of these new missionaries. The Archbishop, especially, Monseigneur Grimaldi, took a lively interest in the association. At his request, the Sovereign Pontiff, Clement VII., authorized this interesting community to teach the Christian doctrine in the County. They procured the Constitutions of the Ursulines of Milan. Monseigneur Grimaldi, Father de Bermont, the director of the Sisters, and the Blessed Cæsar de Bus, who was then at Avignon, made a joint examination of them; and with one accord, advised the holy associates to affiliate themselves to the monastery already founded beyond the Alps. Madamoiselle de Vaucleuse, one of them, then offered a furnished house in the town of L'Isle belonging to her. The Sisters took possession almost immediately under the direction of Madamoiselle de Bermont, who was appointed Superior.

The tidings of this establishment soon reached Aix and Marseilles.* Mother de Bermont was called upon to found congregations there, and thus showed in all Provence that Heaven had destined her to revive the wisdom and humility of Saint Angela. The institute was not long in making itself known in the rest of the kingdom;

* The congregation of Aix began in 1600, that of Marseilles was founded three years after.

and we may say, that after the house of Milan, of which they were filiations, the Ursulines of Provence became themselves the spiritual Mothers of most of the houses subsequently established in Europe.

Meanwhile the congregation of Paris first gave the daughters of Saint Angela the example of the highest perfection, and in this regard, it deserves to hold the first rank among the nine congregations which were established in France.* Each of these formed till 1792, an affiliation of convents, in which the Ursulines, restricted indeed to the institute of Saint Angela, nevertheless differed in the various particular Constitutions added. They were like so many provinces of the order; for, in most cases, they comprised a considerable district of country, in which all the convents followed the same discipline. There never were, however, provincial governors or superiors, at least in France; for the Ursulines were there always subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishops.

Many miracles were wrought, as we have seen, at the tomb of Saint Angela. It would

* The centres of these were Paris, Lyons, Bordeaux, Dijon, Toulouse, Tulle, Arles; the two last were composed of religious not bound by monastic vows, but merely congregated.

be long, impossible even, to recount all these celestial favors obtained through the intercession of Saint Angela. There are, however, three which were examined during the process of her canonization, and recognized as really works which God in his mercy had wrought through the invocation of his holy servant.

Angela Felipina, of Brescia, was afflicted with that terrible disease, the scrofula, and an inveterate ulcer was rapidly consuming her right leg. Despairing of all human aid, for her case defied all medical science, she invoked the aid of the holy virgin, Mother Angela. The relics of the servant of God were not applied in vain. Angela was perfectly and instantaneously healed, and recovered her strength so as to show no signs of her former languor.

Similar was the case of Maria di Aquafredda, also of Brescia. Struck down by a fit of apoplexy, she recovered consciousness only to find herself still half in the chilling hands of death. The right side of her body was motionless, her limbs and tongue refused all action, and other difficulties rendered her state one of helpless suffering. Saint Angela restored her to perfect health.

Maria Angela Comminia, of Verona, had no less confidence in the foundress of the Ursu-

lines. She, too, was afflicted with a complete paralysis of the left side, resulting from an apoplectic stroke, and attended with violent pains in the chest. Her cure was sudden and perfect, and her recovery of strength complete.

The testimony of these miracles was clear and indisputable. They stood all the critical tests and examination to which all supposed miracles are subjected in the course of a process of canonization; and they cannot but lead us to hope for the interposition of the Saint in all our difficulties of soul and body.

The church of Saint Afra became a place of pilgrimage, where the faithful of all ranks flocked to implore her powerful intercession with God. The Sovereign Pontiff, Clement XIII., at first, by a decree dated 30th April, 1768, approved the cultus, till then spontaneously rendered her. On the 12th of June, 1777, it was declared by the Congregation of Rites, that the blessed Angela had received of God in a heroic degree, the four cardinal virtues; and a few days after, Pope Pius VI. confirmed this decision.

Mother Mary Louisa, of Saint Joseph,* Su-

*Mother Mary Louisa, of St. Joseph, was born at Venice, on the 26th of December, 1718. Left an orphan at the age of eighteen, she was placed by two uncles, religious at

perior of the Ursulines of Rome, then made incredible efforts to bring to a close the process of canonization. The convents of France, to the number of three hundred and more, with those of Belgium and Germany, excited by her active correspondence, subscribed to meet the expense naturally entailed by these proceedings. From Rome she directed in Brescia the necessary operations for the discovery of documents. A conflagration had consumed the archives, on which the memoirs, touching the miracles effected by Saint Angela were comprised. She found means to obtain from other convents copies of these and other important documents. The truth of the miracles was verified with extreme attention by a full communion of Cardi-

Rome, in one of the convents of that capital of the Christian world. It was here that her vocation was evinced, but her choice fell on the Ursuline convent of Rome. At the age of forty, she was elected Superior, and held this office, alternately with that of assistant for many years. In her novitiate, she had conceived the idea of laboring for the canonization of Saint Angela, associating with her subsequently a French novice of the name of Sister Bernardine. The activity of her mind, and her physical strength were sometimes exhausted in researches after the necessary documents for the conclusion of the process. This venerable Mother died on the 26th of January, 1802, without seeing her desires realized by the canonization of Saint Angela.

nals, who, after a three-fold examination, pronounced in favor of their authenticity.

On the report of these eminently enlightened dignitaries, Pius VI., after invoking the divine light, solemnly decided on the 27th of January, 1790, that three miraculous cures had been undoubtedly wrought by the mediation of the Blessed Angela Merici. On the 15th of the following August, he declared that her canonization might in all security be proceeded with. But the French Revolution, which burst out at that time, troubled the peace of the Church.

Her venerable head could not himself canonize the servant of God. It was Pius VIII., who, on the 24th of May, 1807, terminated this affair, so important to the order of Saint Ursula, and to all Christendom. Four other beatified servants of God, Caraccioli, Benedict of Saint Philadelpho, Colette Boilet, and Hyacinth Mariscotti, were at the same time canonized. His holiness pronounced on this solemn occasion, an allocution worthy of the head of the Church, in which he returned thanks to God for having offered God such illustrious models, after the terrible storms which had just burst over the face of Catholicity.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

Mother de Bermond—Foundress of the French Ursulines—Her labors—Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, and Madame de Sainte Beuve—The Ursulines of Paris—Pope Paul V. erects the community into a religious order—Mother Cecilia the first Ursuline Nun—Spread of the order in France.

France was, as we have seen, the land where the work of Saint Angela reached its greatest development, and whence it extended far and wide. Here it first became a religious order; varying according to the various congregations formed, all retaining the rule and spirit of Saint Angela; but with particular Constitutions to suit the work, that each, in its own sphere, was called upon to perform. As a religious order, the Ursulines spread from France to Belgium, Ireland, Germany, Canada, Louisiana, then French colonies; Germany and Belgium bestowed the order on Italy, Louisiana on Cuba,

France, Ireland Canada, and Germany, on the United States.

Multiform in its constitutions, rules, and history, we cannot here give the history of the order, but we propose to treat, first in general, of the Ursulines in France; their successful labors, their heroic constancy, and even martyrdom, during the reign of terror. The origin of the convents of the order in Germany, Ireland, and America, will then form a chapter singularly edifying, full of consolation and encouragement, and calculated no less to inspire us with the most profound submission to God's holy will in love.

The order of Saint Ursula, which had spread over many towns of Italy, owed its introduction into France, as we have seen, to Frances de Bermond. This mother of many daughters was born at Avignon, in 1572, of most excellent and pious parents. Peter de Bermond, her father, was treasurer of France for Provence, and receiver of the customs of the port of Marseilles. Of the nine children whom his wife, Perette de Marsillon, bore him, one, their only son, became a priest of the Oratory, and died in the odor of sanctity, and five daughters became nuns. No sooner was Frances born, than her parents offered her to the Blessed Virgin, putting their

infant daughter under the special protection of the Mother of Purity. This was not a mere impulse of pious fervor, but a real offering; and they brought up their daughter with every possible care, inspiring her tender heart with a love of virtue, and a horror of vice, especially of falsehood. She was full of talent, and wrote with such ease and elegance, that some of her juvenile poems were printed. This led her to the perusal of light and trifling works; but generously renouncing all the vanities of the world, she resolved to consecrate herself to God.

She accordingly took a vow of chastity, and placed herself under the direction of Father Romillon, of the Christian doctrine. Her sudden conversion caused a great deal of raillery in the gay circles in which she had moved, but she showed the ascendancy of her genius by gaining some of her former associates to her new ideas, and with them she devoted herself to works of piety, and especially to catechising and instructing children.

Among the penitents of Father Romillon, was the daughter of the Baron de Vaucleuse, who also sought to devote herself to a life of piety and sacrifice. The bishop of Carpentras, in whose hands she had made a vow of virginity, gave her a copy of the Constitutions of the Ursulines

of Milan, which she showed to her director. That good religious, on examining it, proposed to Madamoiselle de Bermond and her companions, to adopt the rule of Saint Angela; they readily assented, and the young baroness, now by her father's death, mistress of her fortunes, hired and furnished a house at Lille, in Venaissin, promising to join them as soon as her temporal affairs should be settled.

The little community of French Ursulines thus founded in 1594, consisted of twenty-five members, who made a simple vow of obedience in the hands of Father Romillon as Superior. Their example, and the zeal which they displayed, excited general admiration. Many other places became desirous of possessing so excellent an Institute, and Mother de Bermond travelled in the humblest mode to found these various congregations at Aix, Marseilles, Pontvise, Paris, and other parts; while Mother Margaret Vigier, of Saint Ursula, one of her first companions, under the direction of the Ven. Cæsar de Bus, founded a house at Toulouse, which became the parent of a separate branch of the order, and indirectly the guide also of the Ursulines of Bordeaux, the largest and most important of all.*

Histoire des Orders Religieux, verbo Ursu-

The Ursulines were still a simple congregation, living in community according to the form given by Saint Charles Borromeo to those of Milan, but a new feature was now introduced, and gradually almost all the Ursulines of various congregations made solemn vows, and became cloistered religious.

The house in Paris was founded in 1604, by a colony of Ursulines, who followed Sister Nicole le Pelletier from Pontvise, on the invitation of Madamoiselle Acarie, the foundress of the French Carmelites, among whom she subsequently entered as a lay sister, assuming the name of Mary of the Incarnation. This blessed servant of God, for she is now beatified by the Church, invited the Ursulines to found a house, as their special object was teaching, which, though not contemplated by their rule, had nevertheless been undertaken by the Carmelites. These holy religious had drawn around them and formed many pious young women, not called by God to their severe order, but still anxious to devote themselves to the service of God. These were soon formed by the Ursulines of Pontvise, who came to Paris for that purpose. As the mere list of names on our pages shows, France was then hallowed by a number of devoted and saintly persons in every

rank of life. Piety was not confined to the cloister, persons of all classes and conditions of life aspired to perfection, and several attained the most eminent sanctity. It was to this happy circumstance that the order of Saint Angela owed its rapid and consoling progress. The house at Paris needed a founder, and the holy Madamoiselle Acarie looked around for one whose piety and wealth would enable her to assume that position. She soon found all she needed in Madame de Sainte Beuve, widow of Claude de Roux, a counsellor of the parliament of Paris. From the death of her husband, she had led the life of a religious, renouncing the world, which offered in vain its incense to the young, beautiful, wealthy, and accomplished widow.

Madame de Sainte Beuve readily undertook the task proposed by the holy Madamoiselle Acarie. She obtained for the Ursulines, what they had not hitherto had, pupils of the first families in Paris; by her connection with it, eleven young ladies were entered as boarders; Madame de Sainte Beuve now purchased ground for the erection of a convent, Monsieur de Marillac, Master of Requests, the father of the first pupil, drew the plans of the building. In order to form the new Ursulines completely, Madame de Sainte Beuve now invited two of the Sisters

of Provence to come and imbue the new community with the spirit of the Holy Virgin of Brescia. Mother de Bermond, herself, with one companion, accordingly repaired to Paris. Hitherto, the object contemplated had been merely to found a congregation like those in other parts of France, but such had not been the view of Madame de Sainte Beuve, who now declared that it had from the first been her intention to make it a monastery of religious. A petition to carry out this view was now drawn up and addressed by her to the Sovereign Pontiff. Rejoiced to find a new order of nuns thus arising in that land, which Calvinism had made such desperate efforts to gain, his Holiness, Pope Paul V., on the 13th of June, 1612, issued a bull erecting the first monastery of the Ursuline order.

On the announcement of the intention of Madame de Sainte Beuve, Mother de Bermond and her companion had been re-called to Provence, and the Abbess, Anne de Roussy, of the Abbey of Saint Stephen at Soissons, had been invited to Paris, to form the Ursulines to the religious state which they were so soon to assume.

By the bull of erection, the order was to be under the rule of Saint Augustine, and the in-

vocation of Saint Ursula, subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Paris, and under his authority to three doctors in theology. The Ursulines, besides the three ordinary religious vows, of poverty, chastity, and obedience, were to take a fourth solemn vow, by which they bound themselves to instruct girls. The novitiate was at first fixed at two years, but subsequently reduced to one. The dress was a grey habit, with a black robe and cloak, and the leathern girdle of Saint Agustine.

The new religious, to the number of twelve, assumed the habit and the white veil with great pomp on the 11th of November, 1612, Monseigneur Henri de Gondi, Bishop of Paris, officiating in the presence of Cardinal de Gondi, and several princesses and ladies of high rank.

Madame de Sainte Beuve continued to entertain and display the liveliest interest in this monastery, which she subsequently enlarged and endowed amply. At last, when her whole fortune, spent in good works, had been lent to Our Lord, when she herself led a life of poverty, as she had long led a life of exemplary piety, this devoted servant of God expired amid the sobs of the poor, on the 29th of August, 1630. Great are the temptations of wealth, greater when youth and beauty are the lot of the pos-

sessor; but in the life of Madame de Sainte Beuve, we see how God guides those who correspond to his grace, and how every state of life is compatible with sanctity. Let us never then despond in our various circumstances, fidelity to God's grace, to prayer, and to the obligations of our state of life, will lead us all to the perfection which our Lord bids us all to seek.*

The first religious of Saint Ursula, was Mother Cecilia de Belloy, of the Cross, born in Picardy, in 1583, who had long desired to embrace the religious state, and had entered the Ursulines of Paris as soon as it was proposed to found a religious order. She was the first of the twelve who received the habit, and the first who made her profession in September, 1614. Seven months afterwards she proceeded to Abbeville in Picardy, where she founded a convent, and within the next few years, similar houses at Amiens, Crepy, and Montargis. In the establishment of this last, she met with great difficulties: but her humility was great, her confidence in God unbounded. To her, this portion of his cross was a sure guarantee that our Lord would protect the house erected in his honor.

* Helyot, Histoire des Ordres Religieux. (Ed. Megne) III. 762.

Ah! how happy should we be, if in the same spirit we met the trials and tribulations of life. Surely, however, Jesus will not disdain to love those whom he deigns to make partakers of his cross.*

While Mother Cecilia† was thus extending the order of Saint Ursula, others from the house at Paris, then and later, founded convents at Rennes, Eu, Rouen, Caen, Saint Omers, Saint Denis, Bourges. Falaise, and Bayeux. Several houses of the congregations of Dijon and Lyons, of which we shall speak, and among others, those in Canada also embraced the rule of Paris, which thus extended to Kistzingen and Erford, in Thuringia, a province of Germany.

When Helyot wrote his history of Monastic Orders, more than a century ago, there were nearly a hundred houses that followed this rule. It has undergone modifications, however, chiefly in 1640, when, by permission of His Holiness, Pope Urban VIII., new constitutions were drawn up, more complete in matter, and methodical in form, adapted to the life which they led, and the exigencies of the field in which the Almighty had, for the good of France, called these daughters of Saint Angela to labor.

* Helyot, Histoire des Ordres Religieux. (Ed. Megne) III. 768. † She died on the 21st of August, 1639.

Of the houses of the rule of Paris which have existed in America, we shall treat in another chapter; but two of those in France having a bearing on those in this country demand a brief notice.

The convents of Amiens and Abbeville were, as we have said, founded by Mother Cecilia, the first Ursuline nun. A few years after, Francis de Wicquet, Lord of Dringhen, moved with the desire of imparting to Boulogne the benefits which everywhere followed the introduction of the Ursulines, applied to the Bishop of Amiens, and on the first of July, 1624, Mothers Saint Augustine, Saint Josse, and Mother de la Trinité, with a Mother and lay sister from Abbeville, were chosen to found the new house. Postulants soon appeared, and the monastery of Boulogne was soon one of the most numerous and fervent in France. After being a nursery of piety in Boulogne for over a century, the convent of Saint Ursula was seized at the beginning of the Revolution, and the community was scattered far and wide, subjected to insult, imprisonment and suffering in every shape. Many fell victims to the violence of the times. As soon as the first burst of the storm had spent its fury, a few Sisters, filled with supernatural courage and devotedness, gathered around Mo-

ther de Saint Maxime, who restored the community, and founded a new convent in 1812. The blessing of God attended her labors, and long before her happy death, she beheld a numerous community of the order of Saint Angela around her.

Since that time the extension of the schools, particularly of that which is destined to furnish gratuitous instruction to poor girls, having become necessary, more land was acquired, and a spacious and convenient church and convent erected. The community now comprises over fifty religious.*

The house at Meaux was founded by one whose name is historical in the annals of America. The illustrious and pious Champlain, founder of Quebec, had married a young Calvinistic lady, Marie Hellen Boullé, whom, however, he soon gained so completely to God, that with his consent they led a life of continence for many years. She even bound herself by vow to embrace the religious state, if she survived her husband, and after his consoling death, she entered the monastery of Saint Jacques, at Paris, on the 7th of November, 1645. Having employed her fortune to found a monastery at Meaux, Sister Helen of Saint Agus-

* Parenty, Notice sur les Ursulines du Nord de la France.

tine, was sent there to effect this great work. After her profession, which took place in this convent, she spent the remainder of her days in the most perfect observance of the rule, and the practice of the most exalted humility and self-denial, the more striking in one who had from childhood been complete mistress of all her actions.*

CHAPTER II.

Mother de Bermond, foundress of the first French congregation of Ursulines, founds the Ursuline Nuns of Lyons—The Ursulines of Toulouse and Bordeaux result from this foundation—Extension of these branches of the order—Other branches of the order in France—The French Revolution—Ursuline Martyrs.

On her return from Paris, Mother de Bermond continued to extend the congregations of Ursulines, such as she had originally established them, watching with all a mother's solicitude over the virgins who entered the sisterhood, and forming them by exhortation and example,

* Ferland, Notice sur Madame Champlain.

to a close imitation of their holy foundress, Saint Angela. In 1610, she founded a house at Lyons, which soon contained a number of fervent Sisters. So pleased was the Archbishop, Monseigneur Denis de Marguemont, with the good effected by it, that he endeavored to give it all possible stability. He urged the Sisters, therefore, to pass from the state of a congregation to that of a religious order. The Sisters readily consented, Mother de Bermond most cheerfully of all: the Archbishop drew up constitutions which were approved at Rome, with permission to the Sisters to take the solemn vows of religion. This was accordingly done in 1620. Mother de Bermond induced other houses to follow this step, and founded several new monasteries, which in time, exceeded a hundred in number. Her favorite abode was the poor convent of Saint Bonet, where this faithful mother of many daughters, after leading a life more angelic than human, died on the 19th of February, 1628, at the age of fifty-six. Happy they, who like her, give to God's service not the few declining years of decrepit age, but youth with all its generous impulses, and the cooler offering of maturity.*

Among the first disciples of Mother de Ber-

* **Helyot,** Histoire des Ordres Religieux. III. 785.

mond at Lille, was Margaret de Vigier, the daughter of a merchant of that city. Under that skilful mistress, Mother de Vigier made rapid progress in all kinds of virtues, and being naturally one of great talents, especially in the instruction of youth, and the direction of her Sisters, she became in time the foundress of a great number of houses.

Having passed to the house at Avignon, she placed herself under the direction of Father Cæsar de Bus, and by his advice founded a house at Chabeuil. On the invitation of Cardinal de Joyeuse, Archbishop of Toulouse, she proceeded to that city in 1604, and aided by a generous counsellor in the parliament, M. Bouret, she triumphed over all difficulties, and founded a house in which she began to lead a more retired and re-collected life, preparing, in fact, for the religious state which she desired to embrace. Her rule, drawn up with the aid of her brother, and the venerable Father de Bus, enforces the most rigorous poverty, and breathes throughout the spirit of God. It was approved in 1615, by His Holiness, Pope Paul V., who erected the house of Toulouse into a monastery. While a simple congregation, the convent of Toulouse had had one filiation, but no sooner did the Ursulines enter the religious state, than city

after city solicited their presence. Ere long, twenty houses followed this rule, the severest of all, for the nuns not only devote themselves to the laborious duty of instruction, but also chant the divine office.*

Cardinal de Sourdes, Archbishop of Bordeaux, edified by the good effected in various parts of France by the communities of Ursulines, became anxious to secure to his diocese such valuable auxiliaries. Several young women of great piety had long been directed by his confessor, and the Archbishop looked upon these as the nucleus of the institute which he was to form. Frances de Cazeres, the oldest and most experienced, with two companions, proceeded to Toulouse, and in the Ursuline convent there imbibed the spirit of the order, and the method of instruction, which the sisters there had so successfully practised. Returning to Bordeaux, in 1606, Mother Frances of the Cross, as she now styled herself from her love for Jesus crucified, began her congregation. Many joined her; but the number of pupils who crowded to their school as postulants increased, however, she was able to found other houses, and established commu-

* Mother Vigier died on the 14th of December, 1646, in her convent of Villefranche.—*Helyot, Histoire des Ordres Religieux.* III. 774.

nities of her congregation at Lebourne, Bourg, Saint Macaire, Lav Poitiers and Angers. These were all erected into monasteries in 1618, by Pope Paul V., and the Sisters took solemn vows, becoming cloistered nuns.

Her order now spread rapidly, and became the most important branch of the Ursulines, comprising, prior to the French revolution, over one hundred houses. It extended to Belgium, Germany, Italy and America. The house at Liege, originally a congregation of Sisters, adopted the rule of Bordeaux, in 1622. From it proceeded the houses at Cologne and Prague, and the convent of Vienna, of which the first members were all titled ladies.* The convent at Rome founded by Pope Innocent XI., was commenced by six religious from the convent at Brussels, and subsequently received accessions from other houses in Belgium.

The Ursulines of this congregation chant the divine office of the Blessed Virgin on holidays, and on other days say the whole rosary. Besides the fasts ordained by the Church, they fast on the eves of many festivals, and every day in Advent.†

* The baronesses of Gaiman, Blier, Salburg, Lasperg, Haiberg, Poulz and Volhra, and the Countesses of Gaurian and Fox.

† Helyot, Histore des Ordres Religieux. III. 778.

Besides these branches of the order, others soon rose in France. That of Dijon was founded as a congregation by Mother Frances de Xaintonge in 1607, and the Sisters embraced the religious state by permission of Pope Paul V., in 1619. That of Burgundy was founded by a sister of the foundress of that of Dijon, Mother Anne de Xaintonge, and soon spread over Switzerland.* The Ursulines of Tulle recognise as their foundress Mother Antoinette Micolon, who failing to unite the various bodies of Ursulines in France, or obtain her aggregation to that of Bordeaux, obtained the Papal approval of her rule in 1623.†

Mother Jane de Rampale, whose father, renouncing the world, entered the society of Jesus, as her mother and sisters did that of Saint Ursula, followed her mother's example. They joined the Ursulines of Avignon, while still a congregation, and Mother Jane was one of the foundresses of the house at Arles, which she governed for twenty years. In 1625, she effected the change by which it, like so many others, became a monastery. She also founded a convent at Avignon with some few others, and died in the monastery of Avignon on the 7th of July,

* Helyot. III. 788, 804.
† Id. 794.

1636, in the odor of sanctity. Her eminent sanctity was indeed attested by so many miracles, that her body which was incorrupt was removed from the spot where she in her humility had ordered it to be interred and transported to the church.*

The Ursulines of the Presentation, who were, at a later date, the restorers of the house at New Orleans, where their rule is still observed, recognize as their foundress, Mother Lucretia de Gastineau. Her community was one of the congregations orignally formed by Mother de Bermond, being a filiation of the house of Pont-Saint-Esprit, founded by that venerable Mother. Sister de Gastineau entered the house of Pont-Saint-Esprit, and was soon an example to all for her humility, exactness, and earnest endeavor to obtain perfection in spite of trials and temptations of every kind. This induced Mother de Luynes, the superior, to choose her to found the house at Avignon, in 1623. Here she became the mistress of novices, and after forming the many Sisters who entered the congregation, proposed to them to become nuns by taking the vows of religion. On their agreeing to her proposals, she drew up rules in concert with Father Bourgoin, third General of the Congre-

* Helyot, III. 798.

gation of the Priest, of the Oratory, and applied to Rome for an approval. Pope Urban VIII. did not reject their petition, but by his brief of February 19, 1637, erected their community into a monastery under the rule of Saint Augustine, the invocation of Saint Ursula, and the title of the Presentation of Our Lady, a title which this Monastery assumed. Mother de Gastineau saw her order extend to various cities, and at last died on the 30th of August, 1657, from wounds caused in an effort to save her Sisters from accident.*

Multiplied under so many different forms, the order of St. Ursula spread for nearly two centuries over France and Belgium, meeting everywhere the wants of the faithful, by giving a religious education to youth. At the epoch of the Revolution, this institute was not only one of the most widely diffused, but also the most edifying. In those unhappy days, the various communities were expelled from their monasteries, and scattered far and wide. Many of the nuns were imprisoned, and put to death; the survivors, faithful to the spirit of the rule, sought to continue their labors by forming schools for girls. Where possible, a few would gather together around some heroic sister, like Mother

* Helyot, III. 801.

St. Maxime, and restore the conventual life at the first dawn of peace.

Among those who, falling victims to the fury of the Revolution, occupy the most illustrious page in the martyrology of the Ursulines, are Mother Clotilda Paillot, superior of the Ursulines of Valenciennes, and her ten companions. When the French army, devastating all before them, entered Valenciennes, the Sisters had retired to Mons, and returned to Valenciennes when it was in the hands of the Austrians. On the re-capture of the city by the Republican forces, twelve Sisters were at once arrested and conducted, with other religious and several priests, to the Church of Notre Dame de la Chaussee. Providence saved one of the Ursulines by a kind of miracle, and this one Sister Angelica Lepont, lived to restore the community twenty-three years after. As some pretext was needed, the Sisters were accused of treasonable correspondence with the enemy, tried by John Baptist Lacoste, representative of the people, and put to death on the 17th and 23d of October, 1794.

On the former day five shed their blood on the scaffold. They were Mothers Nathalie Vanot, who thus closed, at the age of seventy-two, a life of which nearly fifty had been spent in the

strictest observance of the rule, Laurentine Pria, Ursula Bourlard, Maria Louisa Ducrès, and Augustina Dujardin. One of the survivors wrote: "Like Saint Ursula and her companions, we are going in a few days to lay down our lives for His love and the maintenance of the faith. The consolations that we experience at the sight of this favor are beyond expression; this proves the power of grace, and without it we should sink under the weight of our pains. Five of us have already met the guillotine—they did not walk, they flew to the scaffold. One of them wishing to be executed before the rest, was obliged to descend from the block and ascend again. They were allowed only a chemise and skirt, and proceeded with their hands tied behind their backs. We expect the same fate. I am sure that my letter will reach you after my death. God's judgments are inscrutable, grant us the aid of your prayers. The priests are executed and this augments our martyrdom."

A few days after this letter, the Mother Superior, Clotilde Paillot, after vainly endeavoring to save her Sisters by assuming the whole act, Mothers Josephine Leroux, Scholastica Leroux, Frances Delcroix, Anna Maria Raux, and Sister Mary Cordula Bare were put to death, full of inexpressible joy, as they had on the eve been

enabled to receive holy communion from the hands of a priest confined in the same prison. On their way to the scaffold they chanted the *Te Deum* and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, edifying all by their death as they had by their life.*

CHAPTER III.

Ursuline Convents in Canada and Louisiana—Mother Mary of the Incarnation—the Convent of Quebec—The Ursulines of Three Rivers and their Hospital—The Ursulines of New Orleans.

The Historians of Canada, and indeed of Northern America, all delight to trace in glowing colors the picture of the virtues, ability and devotedness of Mother Mary of the Incarnation, the foundress of the Ursulines of Quebec, and men have not hesitated to bestow upon her the title of the Saint Teresa of New France. Not only has her life been twice written, but her letters have been collected and published, one writer at least being impelled by gratitude for favors which he had received through her intercession.

* Parenty, Notices Historiques sur les Monastères d'Ursulines du Nord de la France, et de la Belguique, 421.

"She was adorned," says the holy Bishop Laval, of Quebec, "with all virtues in a most eminent degree; particularly with such a gift of prayer, and so perfect a union with God, that she never lost his Divine presence amidst the most embarrassing affairs, and the different occupations to which her vocation obliged her. She was dead to herself: Jesus alone lived and acted in her. God having chosen her to commence the establishment of the holy order of Saint Ursula in Canada, endowed her in great plenitude with the spirit of the Institute. She was a perfect superior, an excellent mistress of novices, capable of filling any post in a religious community. Her life, common exteriorly, but interiorly, all divine, was a living rule for her sisters. Her zeal for souls, particularly for the conversion of the Indians, was so ardent and extensive, that she seemed to bear them all in her heart. We doubt not that her prayers procured for this infant church of Canada, in a great measure, the favors bestowed upon it."

This eminent Ursuline was born at Tours, in France, on the 18th of October, 1599, where her father, Florent Guyard, was a silk merchant, more eminent for uprightness and probity, than for wealth. Mary Guyard evinced from childhood a deep and tender piety, as well as a lively

charity and compassion for the poor. When only fourteen, she wished to enter a convent, but her parents treated this as a momentary fervor, and at the age of seventeen, married her to a Mr. N. Martin, a silk manufacturer. Her married life was short, for she was left a widow at the age of nineteen; but nevertheless, that period was one of almost constant suffering. But this, God in his providence permitted to purify her soul, and elevate her in the spirit of prayer. On her husband's death, she was left without means, and soon after accepted the invitation of one of her sisters to go and aid her in her establishment. Here she became a perfect drudge; for, in consequence of her knowledge of business, all the important part was thrown upon her. Yet so re-collected, so full of the presence of God was she, that when sitting at her desk in the hurry of trade, she habitually raised her mind to God at every little interval or pause, when she took a fresh penful of ink, or took up a different book. Her austerities at the same time were extreme and continual:—disciplines, hair cloth, exposure to the cold, mortification of the taste: and this life was truly supernatural, for she was favored with many extacies and supernatural lights. Yet neither toil nor prayer consumed her time, she

found leisure for works of charity. In her sister's house, as in her own, she was the temporal and spiritual mother of the work-people and servants, watching over them with a deep sense of the responsibility of a Christian mistress.

She had rejected very favorable offers of marriage and remained in the world only for the sake of her son. When he had reached the age of twelve, she resolved to follow the long suppressed inclination of her heart, and enter a religious order. She first thought of joining the Carmelites, but the erection of an Ursuline convent at Tours seemed to offer her a life more in unison with her zeal for her neighbors' salvation by the active works of charity.

No sooner had the venerable Mother of the Holy Cross, foundress of the Ursulines of Bordeaux, established the convent of Tours, in 1629, than Madame Martin felt so urged by the spirit of God to enter the community, that, though without any dowry to offer, she resolved to apply for admission, and was received. Her sister and brother-in-law endeavored to prevent her step by reproaches, and by exciting her son against her. So long as she had labored for them, they were silent, but when she preferred to labor for God, they discovered that

she was an unnatural mother! Such is the vain wisdom of men; money may be squandered in sin, in vanity, in amusements, and the world has no censure; but it has an objection to make to every cent bestowed on God's Church, or God's poor. The good widow had placed her son with the Jesuits, and he afterwards became a learned and holy Benedictine.

Assuming the name of Mary of the Incarnation, the good widow passed her novitiate in the utmost fervor, yet, as often happens, a prey to temptations of every description, such as never assailed her in the world. Yet this was not without a purpose, which, with all our blindness, we can discern in God's providence. He destined her to be the directress and mother of many others, and taught her by experience that she might skillfully aid those endowed with less strength. On the completion of her noviceship, she was made Mistress of Novices, and prepared to lead, as she supposed, the rest of her life in the monastery, wherein her profession had enclosed. But the Almighty showed her that this was not His will. In a vision, she beheld a land under the protection of Saint Joseph, to which Jesus and Mary invited her. At first, she did not know this land, but she soon heard interiorly: "It is Canada that has been shown

thee: thither must thou go to build a house for Jesus and Mary."

But Canada was almost unknown to her, and she waited God's will in silence. Almost at the same time, a holy lady, Magdalen de Chauvigny, widow of M. de la Peltrie, having read one of the Relations, published by the Jesuits annually, to give an account of their missions in Canada, felt impelled to devote her fortune to the establishment of a house in Canada, in honor of Saint Joseph, for the instruction and civilization of Indian girls, and falling sick, made a vow to do so on her recovery, which instantly followed. She had long renounced all ideas of marriage, and resolved to give not only her means, but also her personal services to the good work. Father Poncet, of the Society of Jesus, who had just arrived from Rome, proposed Mother Mary of the Incarnation, as one eminently suited for her project, and wrote to her announcing his own vocation to Canada, and sending her a Relation of those missions. This was the more extraordinary, as he did not know her, and was unknown to her. God alone could have acquainted him with her dispositions.

The family of Madame de la Peltrie made great opposition, but aided by M. Bernieres de Louvigny, the author of the Interior Christian,

she was enabled to carry out her project. With letters from Father Binet, the Commander de Sillery, and other persons of note at Paris, she proceeded to Tours, to solicit Mother Mary of the Incarnation and a companion, to found the house in Canada. She found all the nuns burning with zeal to go. Mother Mary was chosen at once, and as her companion, Mother Mary of Saint Bernard, a young nun, who triumphed over the opposition of her family only by the aid of Saint Joseph, whose name she thenceforward adopted. With the benediction of the Archbishop, they left Tours on the 22nd of February, 1639, and after a short stay in the convent at Paris, proceeded to Dieppe, where they were joined by Mother Cecilia of the Holy Cross. This little community, with Madame de la Peltrie, and three hospital Sisters, going to found a house in Canada, embarked on the Saint Joseph, for so their vessel was called. This illustrious Saint had been the protector of the project with which he inspired Mother Mary and Madame de la Peltrie, aiding them in every difficulty and trial: he was now the patron of their voyage, and saved them from shipwreck.

Their arrival in Quebec on the 1st of August, 1639, was followed by the immediate foundation, in a small and inconvenient house,

of the first monastery of Saint Ursula in America. Full of zeal for the salvation of souls, Mother Mary, on landing, had prostrated herself on the ground to kiss the earth where she was now to labor, and her earliest task was the study of the Algonquin, to enable her to teach the Indian girls. The labor was so great, that the Sisters were sinking under it when other Ursulines joined them from Paris, sent by the venerable Mother Mary Peron of Saint Magdalen, the Superior at the time, who took a lively interest in the great work. Tours, too, furnished more of her devoted nuns, and a community was thus formed. The Sisters were, however, of different rules, some of that of Bordeaux, others of that of Paris. Father Jerome Lalemant, with Mother Mary of the Incarnation, who had been chosen Superior, now drew up a rule, under which they lived till 1682, when they affiliated themselves entirely to the congregation of Paris.

In a new and strange country, this convent had much to contend with: their first convent, erected in 1641, was reduced to ashes on the 30th of December, 1650; and so great was the poverty of the colony, that it was proposed to send them back to France; but Madame Peltrie was their constant support, and all generously

aided them, the hospital nuns affording them a home till their monastery was re-built, as they did again in 1686, when a similar misfortune overtook the Ursulines.

Mother Mary of the Incarnation formed her community by her counsel and example, and took the liveliest interest in all that concerned God's Church. The destruction of the Huron mission was a deep affliction to her; but it only gave a new field to her charity. She devoted herself to the spiritual and temporal relief of the fugitive Hurons, especially the girls. After a life of holiness and devoted zeal, that has elicited the admiration of all writers, Catholic and Protestant, Mother Mary of the Incarnation died in the odor of sanctity, on the 30th of April, 1672, revered and honored by all, but regretted especially by the community which she had founded, and to which she had ever been a wise and prudent Mother.*

As we have seen, the education of Indian girls was one of the great objects of the academy established by the Ursulines of Quebec, and Mother Mary had learned the Algonquin and Montagnais, then subsequently the Huron lan-

* Charlevoix, Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, Paris, 1724. There is a sketch of her life in English in the work entitled *Catholic Biography*, London, 1846.

guage, to be able to instruct her pupils. Iroquois and Abnaki maidens were afterwards admitted; but the Indians diminished in number, and the great number of pupils was soon of French origin. In this way it has rendered incalculable service to Canada, keeping alive the spirit of religion, and maintaining the education of the young of their own sex, especially during those first years of British rule, when the government, by suppressing the college of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, sought to check the education of the Canadians. Since its foundation, the Ursuline academy has formed more than six thousand pupils as boarders, and nearly twenty thousand day scholars.

At the close of 1583, the community numbered fifty-five professed nuns, and four novices; while their academy contained one hundred and sixty-eight boarders and half-boarders, and their free school one hundred and thirty-nine pupils.*

Monseigneur de St. Valier, the second Bishop of Quebec, moved by the wants of his flock, resolved to found a hospital at Three Rivers, and as he had just drawn some members from the hospital nuns of Quebec to establish a General Hospital there, he now appealed to the Ursulines to undertake the direction of the hospital

* De Courcy, Les Servantes de Dieu en Canada. 28.

at Three Rivers. As we have seen, all the works of mercy were originally the field selected by Saint Angela for her labors: it was, therefore, a return to a primitive idea of the order to assume the care of the sick. The Ursulines of Quebec so regarded it. Four professed nuns, Mother Mary Bronet de Jesus, being Superior, and one lay sister, accordingly left the monastery of Quebec, and ascending the St. Lawrence, established the community of Ursulines of Three Rivers on the 22nd of December, 1697.

The pious Bishop not only erected this hospital with his own resources, but moreover, left it a regular income. The good nuns corresponded to the charity of the Bishop, and all the officers of government bore testimony to their strict observance of their rule, and their care of the patients confided to them. They have never lost their primitive fervor, but still continue to edify all.

This convent has had its trials, like so many others in Canada, having been twice destroyed by fire in 1752, and in 1806; but in each case, the promptitude with which the citizens hastened to furnish means for re-building, evinces the high regard entertained for the exemplary community.

In December, 1853, this convent contained forty-two professed, and two novices; their academy sixty-five boarders; their free-school, one hundred and forty pupils; and their hospital, one hundred and four patients.*

CHAPTER IV.

The Ursuline Convent of New Orleans—Mother Mary Tranchepain de Saint Augustin—Their hospital and asylums—Filiation of this house—Convents of Havana—Convents of Galveston and San Antonio.

When the colony of Louisiana was at last established in a permanent form, Father de Beaubois, an excellent Jesuit missionary, who had already labored for some years in Illinois, set out for France, to obtain, if possible, subjects and means to found at New Orleans an establishment of his own order, and a house of Ursuline nuns. His zeal for God's glory was not fruitless, he addressed himself to an Ursuline of unbounded zeal, Mother Marie Tranchepain de St. Augustin, one of those heroic souls

* De Courcy, Les Servantes de Dieu en Canada. 66.

whom God so often draws from the midst of heresy, and in spite of obstacles of every kind, they succeeded by the assistance of Mother Catherine de Beausobré de St. Amant, superior of the Ursulines of France, in arranging with the West India Company the treaty of foundation, and obtained the royal approbation for the new convent.* Some Bishops opposed the project, but at last, on the 12th of January, 1727, Mother Marie Tranchepain de St. Augustin, a convert, who had been confirmed as Superior by the Bishop of Quebec, assembled around her in the infirmary of Hennebon, Sister Margaret Judde de St. Jean l'Evangeliste, and Sister Marianne Boulanger de St. Angelique, both of the community of Rouen; Sister Magdalen de Mahieu de St. François Xavier, of that of Havre; Sister Renée Guiguel de St. Marie, from that of Vannes; Sister Margaret de Salaon de St. Therese, of that of Ploermel; Sister Cecilia Cavelier de St. Joseph, from that of Elboeuf; and Sister Marianne Dain, of the house of Hennebon, with the novice Marie Hachard de St. Stanislas, and two lay sisters, all except Sister St. Mary of the congregation of Paris, which she also joined.†

* The Royal approbation is dated September 18, 1726. *Brevet en faveur des Religeuses Ursulines de la Louisiane*

† Cronique des Ursulines de la Nouvelle Orleans. *Ms.*

They embarked at L'Orient on the 22nd of February, in the same vessel with Fathers Doutrebau and Tartarin, Jesuit missionaries, destined also for Louisiana. Their voyage was one of danger and misfortunes, and also of hardship, for they suffered much from the brutal treatment of the captain, and after being tossed by tempests, driven into Madeira, chased by pirates, they ran ashore, soon after entering the gulf, and reached the port of Balize, at the mouth of the Mississippi, only on the 23rd of July, five months after their departure. While landing here they were all nearly drowned, as a storm came on at a moment when their boats were heavily laden and the sailors intoxicated: after reaching land they received letters from Father de Beaubois, who was impatiently awaiting their arrival, and had prepared a residence for them. They accordingly embarked in periauguas, and on the 6th of August reached New Orleans and took possession of a house hired for them by the company.*

By the treaty concluded between the Ursulines and the company, the latter were to build a monastery, to maintain six religious, and pay

* Relation du Voyage des fondatrices de la Nouvelle Orleans écrite aux Ursulines de France, par la Mère St. Augustin. *Ms.* Lettres Circulaires. *Ms.*

their passage and that of four servants; the Ursulines undertaking to direct the military hospital and poor schools. In accordance with this agreement the company began to erect a monastery, but the work was neglected, and six years elapsed before it was ready to receive them. Exposed as they were to great inconvenience, the good Sisters bore up against these trials and devoted themselves to the faithful observance of their holy rule.

While thus situated they were at a distance from the hospital, and unable to attend it, but they took charge of orphans, opened a school, and undertook the instruction of poor children.* A number of orphans claimed their motherly care almost immediately after their arrival. The Natchez, a powerful tribe of Indians, who dwelt where the city of that name now stands, provoked by the tyranny of Chopart, the commandant of the neighboring French post, rose in 1728, and massacreing the men, reduced the women and children to slavery. Many of the latter were rescued, and the orphans confided to the care of the Ursulines. Father Le Petit,

* Dumont in Louisiana, Hist. Coll. v. 26. Gayarre, Histoire de la Louisiane, i. 223. Id. Louisiana, its Colonial History, 384. Charlevoix, Histoire de la Nouvelle France. iv. 239.

in his letter of July 12th, 1730, thus speaks of them: "The little girls whom none of the inhabitants wish to adopt, have greatly enlarged the interesting company of orphans whom the nuns are bringing up. The great number of these children only serves to increase their charity and attention. They have formed them into a separate class, and have appointed two special matrons for their care. There is not one of this holy sisterhood but is delighted at having crossed the ocean, nor do they seek here any other happiness than that of preserving those children in their innocence, and giving a polite and Christian education to these young French girls, who are in danger of being almost as degraded as the slaves. We may hope, with regard to these holy women, that before the end of the year they will occupy the new mansion which is intended for them, and for which they have waited so long. Once settled there they will add to the instruction of the boarders, day scholars, orphans and colored women, the care of the sick in the hospital, and of an asylum for penitent women. . . . So many works of charity would in France be sufficient to occupy many associations, and different institutions. But what cannot zeal effect? These different labors do not terrify seven Ursulines, and by

God's grace they accomplish them without interfering with the observance of their rule. Yet for my own part I fear greatly, that unless assistants arrive, they will succumb beneath the hardship. Those who here ignorantly said at first that the nuns came too soon, and too many, have changed their language and ideas: witnessing their edifying lives and their immense service to the colony, they find now that they did not arrive soon enough, and that too many, of their virtue and merit, cannot come."*

The next year Father D'Avaugour, the procurator of the Jesuit missions in Louisiana, presented a memorial to the government, in which he detailed the advantages of the institution, and besought the government to send six additional Sisters, and to grant the convent at New Orleans the privileges which the order enjoyed in France.†

A few years later while laboring, as best they could, for their own salvation and the temporal and spiritual works of mercy which they had undertaken, so far as their temporary accommodations permitted, the community beheld three of its dear members taken from them by

* Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses—xx, 100. Kip's Jesuit Missions, p. 301.

† Louisiana Historical Collections, i, 68.

death, the saintly Sister Magdalen of St. Francis Xavier, Sister Margaret de St. Therese, and Sister Margaret de St. Jean. A more severe blow awaited them still: she who had been their directress, guide and mother, their beloved Superior, expired amid her remaining children in November, 1733.

Chosen by God's mercy from the very centre of a Protestant family and Protestant society, Mlle. Tranchepain felt herself drawn to the faith, and yielding to the attraction of grace, made her abjuration at the Ursuline Convent at Rouen, in which some years later, (1699,) she was received as a novice. Her most ardent wish was to be sent on some foreign mission, but she learnt interiorly that this favor was only to be purchased by crosses of every kind. Her joyful acceptance of Father Beaubois' offer was in full consciousness of the trials that awaited her: and few could have triumphed over so many obstacles as she did in gathering companions around her and in reaching the Mississippi. Her piety, however, was tender and solid; her faith and hope unmovable, and her charity all-embracing. She possessed, too, in an eminent degree, all the qualities necessary for a Superior, and all that is needed to make one respected even by those whom virtue touches the

least. Her mind was quick and penetrating, her manners accomplished, her conversation lively, but always seasoned with holy thoughts. On Saint Ursulas' day, in 1733, she was seized with violent pains and vomiting, but did not yield to the violencc of the disease or cease from performing her regular duties. In another day, however, she was entirely prostrated, and unable to leave her couch: she now prepared for her last passage, and having been permitted to receive the last sacraments from the hands of her holy director, Father de Beaubois, she died after an illness of eighteen days.

On the 17th of July, 1734, the Ursulines, whose numbers had been increased by new arrivals, and who were now directed by Mother St. André, a professed Sister from Caen, took possession of their new house, a brick convent, which still subsists on Condê street, between Barrack and Hospital. The ceremony was one of great pomp and solemnity: the Governor, with his staff, the civil and military officers, and the troops, all taking part in the procession. Nine religious entered the new monastery, but of these only three were of the number of the original founders; Mother St. Mary of Vannes, Mother St. Joseph of Elboeuf, and Mother St. Stanislas, undeterred by the death

of the others, and the return of one more, had preserved, and joined by others from Caen, Bayeux and Dieppe, and by postulants in the colony itself, now saw all their hopes realized.*

The hospital was not quite finished, but the sick were transported to it on the 26th of August, and the nuns took charge of them, as well as of the orphans, Sister St. Xavier having the honor of being the first *hospitaliere*. Fifty sick soldiers soon demanded their care, and it was never wanting.

The children of the hapless Acadians soon after called for their care, and their house was open to the afflicted, receiving the orphans whom England had robbed of parents. One of these, Mary Blanc, remained as portress in the house, and lived more than a century, almost to our own day.

The Sisters were compelled, however, to go to great expense to make their building suitable for their purposes, so carelessly had it been erected by the interested contractors.

Troubles occurred about the middle of the last century, at New Orleans, between the vari-

* The first American was the lay sister Mary Turpin de St. Marthe, born in Illinois, of a Canadian father and an Indian mother. After a life of great piety she died in 1761, at the age of fifty-two.

ous ecclesiastics there, and the Ursulines, to their regret, beheld the venerable Father Beaubois suspended: the Bishop of Quebec, unable from the great distance to visit New Orleans, or obtain exact information, could only sympathise with the good nuns. When Louis XV. basely yielded his possessions in America to Britain and Spain, the Bishop of Quebec rejoiced to see New Orleans pass under the protection of a Catholic power, and congratulated the excellent nuns on being now subject to the Bishop of Havana, hoping that a remedy would at last be brought to the evils under which they had so long suffered.*

Soon after the cession, however, several Sisters died, and in consequence of the small number of nuns and the difficulty of obtaining others from France, while trade was interdicted, they were compelled to relinquish the care of the military hospital on the first of January, 1770. Some years after, Mother Marie Therese Landelle de St. Jacques, who was fifteen years Superior during her last term, begged some French clergymen returning home, to obtain, if possible, some Sisters from that country, and also wrote in 1783, to a Jesuit missionary in France,

* *Lettre de Mgr. Briand*, for which I am indebted to H. de Courcy, Esq.

who had long been in Louisiana. The latter applied at once to the Ursuline Convent of the Presentation of our lady at Pont St. Esprit. Sister Mary Theresa Farjon, a native of the environs of Avignon, known as Mother St. Francis Xavier, on hearing the letter read, offered to go, and was joined by two young Sisters, St. Felicité and St. André. They left their convent on the 25th of September, 1785, little supposing that in a few years it would be all desolate, and on the 11th of February, 1786, reached New Orleans. Here a sudden trouble arose. Mother St. Monica, a Spanish religious, was Superior: she refused to receive the French Sisters, and showed a letter from the Rt. Rev. Cyril de Tricaly, Bishop of Havana, ordering them to be ranked after all the other professed. To this, Mother St. Francis Xavier and her companions submitted, but a new letter of the Bishop, condemning Mother St. Jacques, announced that the Sisters must await the order of the Spanish court. The king of Spain had, however, already approved their going, and ordered their proper rank to be assigned to them.

During the succeeding years of the Spanish rule, the convent enjoyed great peace and prosperity; and a wealthy gentleman named Almo-

naster, built them, at his own expense, a church, choir and day-school for their use.*

Another change of government, however, soon followed. The French revolution had annihilated the sanctuaries of religion in France, and ere long brought Spain to a state bordering on dependence. Forced by circumstances, Spain in 1802 ceded back to France the colony of Louisiana. The news of this cession filled the nuns at New Orleans with alarm: all considered their dispersion certain, and some saw no alternative but to sell all and provide means of support: and of nineteen professed, only six were willing to remain even if the French government would protect them, the rest wished the property sold and their dowries returned to enable them to go to Havana. The prefect, Mr. Laussat, arrived on the 26th of March, 1803, and calmed all fears by declaring that the Sisters might lay aside all fear, that they could remain undisturbed as they were. The city flocked to the convent to congratulate them, but the Spanish party still wished to leave, and as the Marquis de Cascalavo, the commissioner of his Catholic majesty, declared that the king would support such as chose to go to Havana, Mother St. Monica, the Superior, Sisters St.

* Annales de la Propagation de la Foi. I, ii, 46.

Augustine, Michael, Raphael, Aloysius Gonzaga, Ursula, Clare and Rose, natives of Spain or Spanish America; Mother St. Ignatius, a French woman; Sisters St. Solange and Avoye, Louisianians; and Sister St. Angela, a native of Scotland, with four lay sisters, departed through the church door on the 29th of May, 1803. Six months after the French prefect transferred the colony to the United States, and the remaining Sisters thus passed under a new and un-Catholic government.

At this epoch the community consisted only of Mothers St. Xavier, Superior, St. Felicité, depositary, and St. André, all three professed of the Ursulines of the Presentation of Our Lady, Mothers St. Mary, assistant, St. Scholastica and St. Charles, natives of this country, and two lay sisters. They had, however, notwithstanding their number, never ceased their labors, singing their office in choir, taking care of the orphans, conducting the school, and on Sundays and holidays instructing the colored people, for the priests were so few that but for these good nuns the negresses would have been as vicious and ignorant as in many parts of the country of English origin.

A new trouble now arose, for it was openly announced that the new government would not

permit the nuns to receive any novices in future, and that on the death of the last survivor, the State would take possession of their convent.* Alarmed at this, Mother St. Xavier addressed a letter to Bishop Carroll, and encouraged by him, appealed, with her eleven Sisters, for more had joined her, in 1804, to Thomas Jefferson, then President of the United States, asking a legislative confirmation of their title, not for their own sake, but for those in whose cause they labored; Governor Clayborne, of Louisiana, had already assured them that they should not be disturbed, and the President himself in a letter to them, assured the "Holy Sisters," for so he styled them, that "the principles of the constitution and the government of the United States were a sure guarantee that their convent would be preserved to them sacred and inviolate." The Secretary of State, James Madison, also wrote to Bishop Carroll, expressing the most kindly sentiments; but the Ursulines did not attain their object, and being subsequently subjected to annoyance, applied to the Louisiana legislature, and obtained a statute confirming their privileges and immunities.

Mother St. Xavier, anxious to increase the

* Ashe's Travels.

number of her community, had written to France to the dispersed members of her old convent, urgently inviting them to come to her aid, and above all, to Sister de St. Michael Gensoul, then at Marseilles. That devout nun then conducted a school, and having obtained twelve young ladies to join her, sought to proceed to New Orleans, but her bishop opposed it, and it was only by applying to his holiness, Pope Pius VII., in 1809, under the invocation of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, to whom she had great devotion, that she obtained the necessary permission. "His Holiness," says Cardinal di Pietro, in reply, "formally approves your condescension to the repeated invitations of your dear sisters in Louisiana, and the desires of the estimable proselytes, whom, by divine grace, you have inspired with so lively an ardor for so excellent a vocation." Thus encouraged, Mother Gensoul sailed to New Orleans, and arrived there on the 30th of December, 1810, with seven postulants, one of whom was Mother St. Vincent, so remarkable for her humility. It was indeed a day of joy and happiness to the little community, which could not sufficiently thank God for so great a grace.

This house had been founded, as we have

seen, by the Ursulines of Paris, but now all the elder religious were of the congregation of the Presentation of Our Lady, and naturally preferred its rule, which was indeed better adapted to the necessities of the convent, not obliging the Sisters to chant the divine office in choir. They accordingly applied to Bishop Dubourg, then administrator of the diocese, for leave to take the title of Presentation of Our Lady, and adopt its rules with some modifications. To this, after mature deliberation, he consented, and the change was finally effected on the 16th of January, 1813.

When the English army was advancing on New Orleans to the cry of "booty and beauty," in 1815, the nuns placed on their altar the "statute of Our Lady of Prompt Succor," which Mother Gensoul had had blessed in her time of trial in France, and had brought with her. Around this token of divine favor they, with many of the pious of the city, ladies and poor negresses, knelt, imploring the God of armies to bless the American cause, and nerve the arm of our soldiers. After the illustrious Jackson had repulsed, with slaughter, the foreign invader, the daughters of St. Angela turned their school rooms into an hospital for the sick and wounded soldiers, and for three months lavished on them every care.

Insensible to this, a judge wished to compel some of the community to appear as witnesses in court: in vain the Ursulines pleaded their rights guaranteed by treaties; they were fined for contempt of court! Mother Gensoul applied to the legislature, and on the 23d of January, 1818, an act was passed guaranteeing their rights and privileges, and prescribing the mode in which their depositions should be taken.

Meanwhile, Bishop Dubourg, then in France, sought postulants for their house, and the nuns, to their great joy, beheld nine arrive in January, 1817. Yet a schism then distracted the Catholics of New Orleans, and the Ursulines were about to abandon it, but consoled by a letter from Pope Pius VII. himself, remained.

The city had ere long grown around their convent: its precincts were repeatedly invaded, especially from a neighboring military hospital, and in spite of their appeals to government the evil augmented. To complete their embarrassment, a street was run through their grounds in 1821. On this they resolved to erect a new convent elsewhere, and selecting a spot three miles below the city, built their present house, into which they entered in September, 1824, one aged religious, who had not passed out of her cloister since her entrance into it in 1766, weeping all the way.

Meanwhile their numbers increased, so that in 1822 there were fifteen or sixteen professed, and a number of novices and postulants,* but as Bishop Dubourg remarked in a letter to the Rt. Rev. J. O. Plessis, bishop of Quebec: "The house, in point of numbers, might seem now to give no cause of alarm; but when I consider the age of the ancient pillars of that edifice, and that at the moment, perhaps not remote, of their fall, there will remain only feeble reeds to replace them, I cannot be tranquil as to the consequences." Anxious to save from extinction a house which he styled elsewhere the "base of religion in Louisiana," the bishop of New Orleans called upon the Ursulines of Quebec to aid their sister convent. "It would seem indispensably necessary to draw here three or four nuns, already professed, of mature age, of tried judgment and virtue, who would fill up the interval which separates the old from the young." The daughters of Mother Mary of the Incarnation responded to their call, and on the 5th of December, 1823, the convent at New Orleans welcomed the arrival of Sisters Felicité Borne de St. Charles, Mary Angelique Bougie

* De Courcy. Les Servantes de Dieu en Canada—Montreal, 1855, p. 28.

de St. Louis Gonzague, and Marie Pelagie Morin de St. Etienne.*

Since that time the convent has continued in great prosperity: educating rich and poor, and affording a home to the orphan, for though the city erected an asylum in December, 1824, the convent still supports many. Since its foundation it has had eighteen Superiors: eighty-three professions have been made in it; and thirty-six have joined it from other houses: sixty-three have died, eleven of whom exceeded the age of eighty. The community now under the worthy Mother St. Seraphine, who has been eighteen years superior, consists of thirty-four members, twenty-one choir nuns, and one novice; ten lay sisters and one novice. Their school contains generally over a hundred boarders, and at least thirty-four or forty ophans. Their chaplain and spiritual guide is the well-known and excellent Abbé Perché.†

The ancient house of New Orleans has not been a fruitless mother: other monasteries of the order of St. Ursula have been founded by its

* Annales de la Propagation de la Foi. I. i. 25. Laity's Directory, 1822, p. 113.

† For the most important facts in relation to this house, the writer is indebted to the kindness of Mother St. Seraphine, the worthy superior.

instrumentality, and are to some extent filiations of the monastery which rose on the banks of the river of the Immaculate Conception.

We have already seen how the large and prosperous community of Ursulines at Havana, in the island of Cuba, was formed by some members of the house at New Orleans. It is more properly a division than a filiation of that monastery. The nineteen Sisters who retired reached Havana on the 23rd of June, 1803, and were cordially welcomed by the Rt. Rev. Juan José Diaz de Espada i Landa, then Bishop of Havana. As no residence had been prepared for them, the Ursulines were at first distributed in the three convents of the city, and remained there till the 4th of April, 1804, when, with due solemnity, they entered their present convent.*

When Texas ceased to be a part of Mexico, and was erected into a vicariate apostolic in 1842, Bishop Odin saw the necessity of a religious community to educate the youth, and in 1846 applied to the Ursulines of New Orleans for a colony of their order. The daughters of Saint Angela cheerfully consented to aid him, and on the 16th of January, 1847, five professed Sisters and three novices, with Mother St. Ar-

* Information from the prioress of the convent at Havana, through Miss C. Ramirez.

sene as Superior, set out for Galveston, where the Bishop had purchased a fine edifice for their use.* The little community was soon unequal to the labors developed upon them, and the good Bishop appealed to the ancient convent of Quebec for assistance. Two nuns were granted to his entreaty.

In 1852, the same Prelate, now Bishop of Galveston, erected a convenient building at San Antonio, for a new convent of the order, and in the following year, a colony from New Orleans, with two nuns from the house in Waterford Ireland, numbering in all nine professed Sisters, two novices, and two postulants, established this new convent of Saint Ursula.†

* U. S. Catholic Magazine, vi, 165. Catholic Almanacs 1847, p. 91; 1848, p. 119. U. S. C.

† Almanac 1851, p. 185; 1853, p. 136

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

The Irish Ursulines—Miss Nano Nagle—Convent of Black Rock, Cork—Filiations in Ireland—In the United States—The Convent in New York—The Convent in Charleston—Its removals.

The soil of Ireland was once covered with monasteries and convents. The holy virgin of Kildare, Saint Bridget, in the life-time of Saint Patrick, founded an order of religious women, which soon spread over the island. These abodes of piety and sanctity flourished through every change, amid civil war and foreign invasion, till the English entered Ireland. Then in the name of religion they were seized, and closed on the Irish race. No monastery, no convent could open its doors to receive a native novice. Religion thus schismatized by the English, was overthrown at last by the formal schism of Henry VIII., and by the establishment of the Church of England under the regent Somerset. Then the religious houses which had been es-

tablished of various orders, and into which the Irish had, in spite of law entered, were suppressed. The Irish Catholic could embrace the religious state only on the continent. Houses of the orders which supplied the missionaries for this nation, were indeed erected on the continent, but few, if any convents for Irish women.

In the designs of Providence, it was reserved to the order founded by Saint Angela Merici, and by her placed under the patronage of the illustrious Saint Ursula, a martyr, of the same race as the apostle of Ireland,—it was reserved to this order to restore to the country which Saint Patrick had evangelized, houses where the virgins whom God inspired to devote their lives to perfection and retirement, might follow their vocation without being compelled, like Saint Ursula and her companions, to fly beyond the sea from the face of the Anglo-Saxon.

The events which led to this happy result were, as often happens, to all human appearances, mere accidents. A young Irish lady, educated at Paris, and mingling in the gay company of that Capital, after spending one night at a fashionable party, was returning home at an early hour in the morning when she suddenly came upon a crowd of poor people

waiting at a church door, not yet opened, for the first mass. Their simple piety, so far removed from her gay, fashionable career, filled her with self-reproach. She resolved to retire from the world, and devote herself to the instruction of the poor. This resolution, formed in a moment of compunction, was not a mere passing volition, as often happens. She became the foundress of the Irish Ursulines.

Miss Nano Nagle, for we write of her, was born in 1728, at Bally-griffin, the family seat of her fore-fathers, on the banks of the Blackwater. After giving her such instruction as his own house could afford, her father, Garrett Nagle, sent her to Paris to complete her education; and at its close, she remained a few years in that city. The events of which we have now spoken, caused her return in 1750, and her fidelity to the inspiration of grace was seen in her instructing and catechising the children in the neighborhood of her father's mansion. She found the ignorance of the people extreme. Penal laws, the scarcity of Priests, the absence of schools, the allurements of heresy, all had contributed to bring about a state of things which grieved her very heart. Unable, for want of means, for she was not yet in possession of any hereditary property, she could not remedy the evil,

and resolved to retire to some religious house on the continent. But she could not forget Ireland, and enlightened directors at Paris assured her that her vocation was to labor for the spiritual regeneration of the poor of her own country.

Returning once more to Ireland, she found herself enabled, in consequence of her father's death, to carry out her plans. Her mother and sister encouraged them, and Miss Nagle opened her first school in Dublin, where a momentary relaxation of the diabolical penal laws permitted her to do so unchecked. After conducting it for some time, the death of her mother and sister left her alone in Dublin, and she then returned to Cork. Here unknown, even to her own family, she secretly opened a school; it soon contained two-hundred girls. Her friends, and others, from whom she had expected great opposition, now encouraged a project so evidently successful, and Miss Nagle soon had under her direction two schools for boys and five for girls in various parts of the city, all well provided with competent teachers, and crowded with pupils. She herself explained the catechism in one of the schools every day, and always prepared the children for their first communion. Often she spent the greater part of the after-

noon teaching children to say their prayers, and on cold, dark winter nights might be seen, lantern in hand, picking her way homeward. Her health had been impaired, but God, who reserved her for so great things for his glory, allowed it now to stand any hardship.

The great work in which she was engaged depended solely on her, and she wished to give it permanence by confiding it to a religious order. By the advice of the Rev. Father Doran, of the Society, and his nephew, the Rev. Francis Moylan,* she resolved to solicit a colony of Ursulines from Paris. Mr. Moylan visited that capital: several nuns offered to go and found the new house, but the Superiors refused permission. They deemed Ireland too insecure for a convent. How little did they imagine that in less than twenty-five years, their whole community would be scattered, vainly seeking refuge, and never to re-unite! Failing in this attempt, it was now proposed that four Irish ladies, Miss Fitzsimmons, then actually in Paris, Misses Coppinger, Nagle and Kavanagh, should enter the novitiate at Saint Jacques, and after the usual term of probation,

* Afterwards Bishop of Cork in 1785. He was brother to Stephen Moylan, Washington's Quarter Master General during the Revolution.

return to Ireland with professed nuns to organize the new convent. These ladies accordingly entered among the Ursulines of Paris on the 5th of September, 1769. At the close of their novitiate, no Ursuline of Paris would accompany them; but Mother Margaret Kelly, of the convent of Dieppe, herself a native of Ireland, hearing of the difficulty, agreed to assist them. This little colony, consisting of Mother Kelly, Sister Angela Fitzsimmons, Sister Augustine Coppinger, Sister Joseph Nagle, and Sister Ursula Kavanagh, accordingly sailed from Havre, and reaching Cork, entered the convent prepared for them on the 18th of September, 1771, having been already joined by Miss Louisa Moylan, and Miss Lawless.

A bull was obtained from Pope Clement XIV., dated January 13th, 1773, by which the monastery was formally established, and the first twelve novices permitted to take their vows after one year's probation. Three of the Sisters accordingly made their profession on the 15th of February, 1774, and Sister Coppinger, who had been prevented by illness, on the 31st of January, 1775, preceded by Sister Moylan. Mother Coppinger was elected Superior, and the community completely oganized, although they did not openly assume the habit till more than four years later.

The Ursulines assumed the charge of Miss Nagle's schools, but as they soon opened a school for higher instruction, Miss Nagle conceived that they did not realize the object of her great desires. She did not enter the order which she had been so instrumental in bestowing on Ireland, but collecting other devoted ladies around her, founded the Sisters of the Presentation, a congregation approved by the Holy See in September, 1791. In this order, Mother Nagle died on the 26th of April, 1784, closing a life of active and energetic charity by a most holy death.

The Ursuline convent of Cork thus founded in 1771, was some years after removed to the picturesque village of Blackrock, near that city, and has ever since continued to impart to rich and poor the blessings of a Christian education.* The nuns have also contributed greatly to English Catholic literature, so sadly deficient in our day. The books of devotion, religious biographies, and especially the class books compiled by them, have carried their apostolate wherever the English language is spoken.

* Neither Brennan's nor Walsh's Ecclesiastical History of Ireland makes any mention of the Irish Ursulines. The above account is drawn mainly from the Dublin Review for December, 1843. See also the memoir of Sister Mary Joseph Regis. Dublin, 1855.

The Institute of Saint Angela was not confined in Ireland to this one convent. The house at Cork has been a fruitful mother, and has filiations at Waterford, Thurles and Sligo, in Ireland, and one of recent origin at Demerara, in South America. Two filiations from this branch of the congregation of Paris have existed in the United States, but they did not attain permanence. The first colony returned to Ireland; the second, unable to maintain its separate existence, dissolved, the Sisters entering other houses of the order.

The former of these was at New York. Early in the present century, Father Anthony Kohlmann, a most holy and learned member of the Society of Jesus, was sent by Archbishop Carroll as Vicar-General of New York, and he was for a time administrator of the newly created See of that name. There he restored religion, renewed the piety of the faithful, and in every way sought to advance the cause of God. Having founded a college for boys where members of his own Society, under the direction of Father Benedict Fenwick, trained them to science and piety, he resolved to procure members of some religious order of women to open an academy for girls. The foundations of Miss Nagle were not unknown to him, and he wrote

to Father Betagh, a celebrated Irish Jesuit, to obtain for him, if possible, some Ursuline nuns to begin a house at New York, intending subsequently to send for some of the Presentation Sisters to conduct the poor schools and open an orphan asylum. The Ursulines of Cork did not shrink from the perils of crossing the Atlantic, and in 1812, three choir religious, Mothers Mary Anne (Christina Fagen), Mary Frances de Chantal (Sarah Walsh), and Mary Paul (Mary Baldwin), sailed from Cork in the vessel of a Catholic captain, and reached New York on the 7th of April. They were joyfully welcomed by Father Kohlmann, and by the Catholics generally, and after opening a school were incorporated by the legislature of the State. Ladies of such talent and polished manners, full of the spirit of their institute, and zealous to do good, soon won the general esteem. Their academy flourished, but no postulants joined them, and as it had been a condition that their stay should be for only three years, unless joined by ladies of the country, they finally closed their house, and, to the great regret of the Catholics, returned to Ireland.*

*De Courcy's Catholic Church in the United States, p. 375. Bishop Bayley's Sketch of the Catholic Church in New York, p. 64; and private letters.

Several years later the second filiation was formed at Charleston, in South Carolina. The Rt. Rev. John England, of Cork, had been appointed the first Bishop of this new see, and on taking possession of it, found his diocese in a most destitute state, especially in point of education. His thoughts turned at once to the Ursulines of Cork, whom he well knew during his ministry in that city. Years, however, elapsed before he could prepare for their coming. At last in 1834 he visited Ireland, and having made known his request, the ladies thought fit were consulted, and in a few days Mother Mary Charles, (Christina Molony,) Sister Mary Borgia, (M. A. Isabella McCarthy,) and Sister Mary Antonia, (Mary Hughes,) all professed sisters, with Miss Woulfe as a postulant, prepared to go. They left the convent on the 27th of September, and proceeding to Liverpool, embarked for Philadelphia. On the 10th of December they entered their monastery in Charleston, and electing Mother Mary Charles as Superior, founded the fourth Ursuline Convent in the United States. Mother Mary Charles was a woman of fine and highly cultivated intellect, fervent zeal, and elevated virtue. The house met with difficulties at first, and was saved from being closed only by her

xertion: she at last placed it on a firm basis, and the Ursulines began their apostolate in Charleston. The academy which they opened soon acquired a high character, and the house increased in prosperity, till the heavy blow caused by the death of the holy and able superior, who expired on the 28th of July, 1837, after a life of eminent usefulness in her order here and in Ireland.* "In Charleston she specially exhorted her sisters, and herself assiduously gave the example, to seek in a particular manner for the females who had been most neglected, and to attend to the catechetical instruction of the children. Hence she was generally to be found with the females of color, and surrounded by the children of every hue who were preparing for their first communion."

Under the subsequent superiors, Mother Mary Borgia and Mary Joseph de Sales, (Woulfe,) the house continued its labors and obtained of the legislature an act of incorporation, but in 1847, for causes which have not reached us, they resolved to leave Charleston, and proceeded to Covington, Kentucky, but the next year crossed the river to Cincinnati. Here they opened an academy, and for several

* See a memoir of her by Bishop England in his works iii. 263.

years rendered great service to religion; but in 1854 the community, then numbering twelve, for cogent reasons resolved to disband, and are at present like those of Charlestown, scattered in different houses of their order, five choir nuns and four lay sisters entering that of which we are now to speak.

CHAPTER II.

The Ursuline Convent at Boston and Charlestown—Its founder, the Rev. John Thayer—The Ryan family—The foundation of the house—Death of the two Misses Ryan—Difficulties of the house—The riot and destruction of the Convent.

The celebrated house at Charlestown, Massachusetts, of which the blackened ruins still stand a monument of New England fanaticism, is connected in no slight degree with the houses in Ireland, inasmuch as its heroic foundresses were pupils of the Ursulines of Thurles, and as their sister and nieces are members of the Ursuline community at Sligo. It was, however, in fact, a distinct foundation in the United States, like the Visitation and Sisters of

Charity, and Mary Catharine and Margaret Ryan, with their angelic cousin and martyr niece, must ever be enshrined in the memory of American Catholics, with Anne Lalor and Mother Seton. Strange were the events which led to its foundation.

Soon after the American Revolution, the Rev. John Thayer, of Boston, who had gone to Rome a Presbyterian clergyman, but converted there by the miracles operated at the bier of the Venerable Benedict Labre, had returned to his native city a Catholic priest, formed the design of establishing a community of religious women in the United States. Soon after his ordination, he had visited the Ursuline Convent of Boulogne sur Mer, and several times celebrated mass in their chapel. He here formed an acquaintance with their institute, and ever after entertained the highest regard for it, regretting that his own land was not possessed of houses of the order. With all his zeal, piety and devotedness, he did not escape the censure of his companions in the ministry, and although employed for a time at Boston, Albany, and in Kentucky, was soon left without a mission, Bishop Carroll declining to give him a pastorship. He now resolved to carry out his great object of founding a convent, and set out in

1803 for Europe to solicit the aid of the faithful; so new was the plan at that time, that it merely drew ridicule upon him from his former opponents, but he persevered, and not without success.* He at last, about 1811, took up his residence permanently at Limerick, and by his zealous labors effected a remarkable change in the fervor and piety of the people. In order to lead them more effectually to God, he endeavored to make himself all to all, and formed a kind friendship and social intercourse with several families, whose children he enlightened with higher views of piety, leading them to the practise of meditation and frequent communion.†

In no house was he more cordially received than that of Mr. James Ryan, whose two sons

* Parenty. Notices sur les Monastères d'Ursulines du Nord de la France, et de la Belgique, p. 156. At his visit, two sisters, moved by his zeal, offered themselves to God, as victims of penance for the conversion of America, and died soon after.

† For Mr. Thayer, see Mr. Nagot's account in "Tableau general des principales conversions." Thayer's own account and his controversy with Lesslie; Spalding's Sketches of Kentucky. From letters preserved in the papers of Bishop Bruté, it is evident that the companions of Mr. Thayer condemned only "his intemperance of speech," his life was irreproachable, and in London and in Limerick he was revered as an apostle.

and five daughters were his most piously disposed penitents. In his visits to this family, he frequently spoke of his conversion, of his labors in Boston, of his darling wish to found an Ursuline Convent there, and of the refusal of the house in Cork to undertake another American mission.

Moved with his description of the spiritual wants of New England, two daughters of Mr. Ryan, Mary and Catharine, unknown to each other, offered Mr. Thayer to go and join his convent. Both were fitted by nature and grace for the task, and had all the advantages of a high and liberal education at the Ursuline Convent in Thurles.*

After long and assiduous prayer, and offering again and again the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Rev. Mr. Thayer wrote to Bishop Cheverus of Boston, enclosing the letters of the two sisters, and the Rev. Richard Walsh also wrote, earnestly recommending them as fit subjects to begin the new monastery. Bishop Cheverus and his inseparable friend and companion, Dr. Matignon, warmly accepted the offer, and desired them to come without delay, promising to make arrangements for their arrival, and for

* Mary Ryan was born May 1, 1785, and Catharine Ryan Dec. 28, 1794.

their performing their novitiate at the house of Three Rivers in Canada. Great was the joy of the two sisters at this announcement, each being in raptures to see that the other was to accompany her. Nor was the joy of the Rev. Mr. Thayer less; he immediately began to prepare for their voyage, but early in 1815 his health began to give way, and he expired on the 5th of February, in Mr. Ryan's house, tended in his last moments by his devoted daughters in Christ. This delayed their project for a time, but in the following year they were about to sail with the blessing of their father, who ceased not to bless God that his daughters had been chosen for so great a work, when he too was called by God to receive the reward of his well-spent life. At last, on the 4th of May, 1817, Misses Mary and Catharine Ryan sailed from Limerick in the ship Victory, for Boston, which they reached safely. Bishop Cheverus more than realized his most sanguine expectations: no father ever welcomed children with more paternal affection. Doctor Matignon at once proceeded with them to the Ursuline Convent in Three Rivers, where they began their novitiate, assuming the religious names of Sister Mary Joseph and Sister Mary Magdalen. At the expiration of their noviceship,

Dr. Martignon in 1818 went to Three Rivers, and escorted them to the convent, which the bishop had prepared near his cathedral. Her Sister Mary Joseph was appointed superior, and organized the little community. The convent being thus founded, their youngest sister Margaret, who had already asked to join her sisters, set out to join them, accompanied by her cousin, Catharine Molineux, a young and pious widow. These sailed first to Quebec, and after spending a week there at the Ursuline Convent, proceeded to Boston in September, 1818. The establishment of a convent in New England, at first excited some discussion in the public papers, which protested against any such institution, but Bishop Cheverus, by an exposition of its objects, calmed the public mind.*

The community thus augmented, by the ar-

* Hamon's life of Cardinal Cheverus, translated by Walsh, p. 109. This elegant writer errs in saying that Bishop Cheverus, applied to a convent of Ursulines and obtained a colony from them, and also errs in ascribing the raising of the funds to the excellent Cheverus. That the latter is due to Mr. Thayer is proved by the letters published in the Boston Catholic Observer, and afterwards in the United States Catholic Magazine, as well as by the letters of Mother Mary Joseph Ursula Quirk, which give a full account of the rise of the convents.

rival of Sister Mary Augustine and Sister Mary Angela, for so they are known in the annals of their order, received accessions in the country, the two first American professed being Sister Mary St. John, (Elizabeth Harrison,) and Sister Mary Frances, (Catharine Wiseman.)* In 1822 the community consisted of a prioress, and six sisters with two novices,† and their school was productive of great good.

The cross, the infallible badge of the elect, now appeared: but it was welcomed by the loving hearts that glowed with holy zeal to become victims of love to him who had immolated himself for them. The gentle Sister Mary Angela was attacked by a pulmonary disorder, and sank under it in 1823: in April, 1825, Sister Mary Magdalen gave evident symptoms of rapid decline, and while she was lingering on the verge of the grave, the Superior, Mother Mary Joseph, was similarly attacked, and perceiving that her earthly career was about to close, wrote earnestly to Quebec to implore the Sisters there to send one of their community to succeed her. Mother Mary Edmond St. George (Mary Ursula Moffat) was chosen as Superior and pro-

* Letter from the Ursulines of Quebec, to H. DeCourcy, Esq.

† Laity's Directory, 1822.

ceeded to Boston, but before she arrived the two devoted Sisters in birth and religion had accomplished their earthly career and passed to the abode of peace, the holy founders of the convent in Boston. A few days after the death of Mother Mary Joseph, Mother Mary Edmond arrived in April, 1824,* and made use of every means to alleviate and soothe the affliction and bereavement of the suffering community, particularly of Sister Mary Augustine, the only survivor of the three heroic Sisters.

The house in Boston was evidently too confined, and in 1826, the Ursulines removed to Charlestown, where suitable grounds had been purchased, and a beautiful convent having been erected, to which the name of Mount Benedict was given. The academy soon acquired an extended reputation, and pupils came from all parts of New England, and even from the southern states and British provinces; while ladies joined the community in numbers sufficient to give every hope of its permanence.

In 1831, however, they charitably received a young woman of a silly, romantic turn, who soon left them, and began by insidious tales and mysterious hints to excite suspicion as to the convent, especially hinting that one of the

* Answer to Six Months in a Convent, p. 6.

nuns had died of ill treatment. These reports repeated and exaggerated, poisoned the public mind, and one of the Sisters laboring under an alienation of mind having run out of the house, a newspaper article charged the nuns with having murdered her. A clergyman whose family have since been most noted in the literary world, especially for exciting works, fanned the flame by delivering no less then three anti-popery sermons in one day, and one of the selectmen of Charlestown, after officially visiting the convent with others, withheld the report, which would have defeated the plan of the conspirators.

Accordingly on the 11th of August, 1834, a mob proceeded to the convent, accompanied by the selectmen. Tar barrels were lighted as signals, no police were present, the crowd increased, shouts were uttered, accompanied with the most horrid blasphemies and imprecations. The Superior in vain endeavored to calm them, the doors and windows were soon broken in by stones and other missiles, and the mob rushing in began the work of destruction. The nuns and their pupils fled, having barely time to dress, and leaving all at the mercy of the citizens of enlightened New England! In a few moments all was in a blaze, the valuables and money were carried off, the chapel violated, the

vestments torn to shreds, the Bible burnt in mockery, the plate carried off, and one wretch taking the sacred species from the tabernacle, went off vomiting his blasphemous boasts till struck with the divine vengeance he became suddenly a maniac, and seemed a victim to devouring flames. To escape the agony he suffered, he seized a razor and cut his throat from ear to ear. The plunder of the convent did not however satisfy the ruffians, they broke open the tomb of the deceased nuns, and finding nothing, left the uncoffined bodies exposed!

The rioters were tried and acquitted.

As soon as quiet was restored, the Ursulines, who had taken refuge with the Sisters of Charity, retired to Brinley Place, Roxbury, where they resumed their community life. One of the devoted nuns, Sister St. Henry (Catherine Quirk), whose life was ebbing slowly away, her feeble health having been ruined by her exposure on that fearful night, could not bear to be separated from her Sisters, and she was actually borne in their arms to her new home. Thence it was her consolation to turn her eyes towards Mount Benedict, that happy abode of her choice, and on the 18th of October, 1834, this angelic neice of Mary, Catherine and Mar-

garet Ryan, calmly expired, praying for the deluded men who had caused her death.*

To justify the whole transaction, a committee, whom shame induced to conceal their names, but among whom Beecher and Kneeland, since synonyms for fanaticism, were the master spirits, published a work entitled "Six Months in a Convent," and purporting to have been written by Miss Reed. Its errors and ignorance were exposed by the Superior of the Ursulines in an able answer, and two Protestant writers in the burlesques "Six Months in a House of Correction," and "The Chronicles of Mount Benedict," cast such ridicule on the committee, that in self-defence they issued a supplement, a strange medley of misquoted statistics and frenzied ignorance.†

* Mother St. Henry (Catherine Quirk) was a niece of the holy foundresses, and her mother and two of her sisters are now members of the Ursuline community of Sligo, and it is to her venerable mother that I am indebted for most of the above details, which I could prolong, did space permit me to yield to the emotion they have excited.—Mother St. Henry was born May 7th, 1815.

† For the accounts of the destruction of the convent, see Bishop England's Works, v. 232, 347. The other publications are Six Months in a Convent.—Supplement to Six Months in a Convent, confirming the narrative of Rebecca Theresa Reed. Boston: Russel, Odiorne & Co., 1835.—Six Months in a House of Correction, or the Narrative of

After a short time the community retired to Quebec, and having made a fruitless attempt to restore their house, in 1838* dispersed in different houses of their rule: and some still survive at Three Rivers, New Orleans, and San Antonio.

CHAPTER III.

Other Ursuline Convents in the United States, and their origin—The Convent of Brown County, Ohio—The Convent of Cleveland—The Convent in St. Louis—The Convent in Morrissania—The Convent at Sault St. Mary's.

The most penetrating eye cannot discern the designs of Divine Providence, or the influence of ordinary events upon the destiny of individuals and of religious society in general. In August, 1839, Archbishop, then Bishop Purcell, of Cincinnati, passing through England on his way to Rome, kindly took charge of two young

Dorah Mahoney. Boston: Mussey, 1835.—The Chronicles of Mount Benedict. Boston: 1835.

* They left Quebec, September 17th, 1838.

ladies going from London to the Ursuline Convent at Boulogne-sur-mer, France. This circumstance, simple as it may appear in itself, eventually gave to the State of Ohio a Bishop, formerly chaplain of that community, nine or ten missionaries from the city and its vicinity, and three communities of Ursulines, in whose foundation the house at Boulogne took a zealous and active part.

This monastery owes its origin to the zeal and piety of Francis du Wicquet, Sieur de Dringhen, who in 1624 resolved to found an Ursuline Convent there, and being encouraged by his Bishop Mgr. Dormy, obtained some religious of St. Ursula from the house at Amiens. On the 1st of July, 1624, Mothers St. Augustine, St. Josse and Mother of the Holy Trinity, burning with zeal for the salvation of souls, left their convent and proceeded to Boulogne, which they reached on the eleventh. On the 30th of September seven postulants joined them, and of the number one was Madamoiselle du Wicquet, the daughter of the pious founder.

The regularity of the convent, the edifying life of the religious, and of their pupils, in whom all Christian graces seemed so successfully implanted and nurtured, surrounded this house with the love of the people, till that fearful

hour, when God determined to try his cherished spouses in France in the crucible of adversity. The thunder clouds which hovered over the land burst in their fury, and the asylums of innocence were first devastated by the revolutionary storm. On the 29th of September, 1793, twenty of the Ursulines of Boulogne, with some Annonciades, were led to Abbeville and confined like criminals by their brutal jailors: their convent was demolished, and religion seemed crushed.

When the first fury of the storm was spent, such of the Ursulines as survived, returned to Boulogne and its neighborhood, and in private families devoted themselves to teaching and other good works. Mother St. Maxime, assisted by two Sisters, opened schools in Boulogne, and in April, 1810, became the restorer and first superioress of the community of Ursulines of Boulogne. Several of the old Sisters joined her, and many postulants applied for admission, among the first the present Mother Superior of the house.*

Such was the convent which Bishop Purcell visited; he was cordially welcomed to Boulogne by the Abbé Améde Rappe, the chaplain of the Ursulines, who touched by the good

* Letter of Mother Mary of the Annunciation.

Bishop's picture of the wants of his diocese, resolved two years after to proceed to Ohio. He had not been long on that laborious mission, when he resolved to obtain, if possible, a colony of the Ursulines of Boulogne, who he knew had, from the time of his departure, projected such a foundation. That house was, however, unable to furnish sufficient members, and his plan seemed hopeless, when the Ursulines of Beaulieu Carèze, hearing that the Bishop of Cincinnati was desirous of having a community of their order, and wishing themselves to send a filiation to the United States, offered to part with four choir and four lay sisters for the good work. As none of these good religious spoke English, they applied to the convent of Boulogne-sur-mer, who gave them one professed choir sister, one novice and one postulant. The little colony from Beaulieu, consisting of Sister St. Pierre (Marie Andiat), Sister St. Stanislaus (Pauline Laurier), Sister St. Augustine (Marie Bouret), Sister St. Angèle (Adeline Demotat), choir sisters, and Sister St. Martial, Sister St. Bernard, Sister St. Marie and Sister St. Christine, lay sisters, proceeded to Havre in April, 1845, and awaited the arrival of the Sisters from Boulogne. These soon appeared, consisting of Sister Julia of the Assumption

(Julia Chatfield), professed, and Miss Matilda Dunn, a postulant, both natives of England, and Sister St. Hyacinth (Caroline Eiffe), a novice of Irish birth.

After a delay of only three days, this holy company left Havre on the 4th of May, 1845, under the protection of the Rev. P. Macheboeuf, and reached the port of New York on the 3d of June. Proceeding to Cincinnati they were cheerfully welcomed by the Bishop, and after spending a month in the house of a charitable Catholic lady, took possession of the Convent of St. Martin's, near Fayetteville, a small brick building, which had previously been a theological seminary, Mother Julia of the Assumption being the first Superior. Two years after, they erected their present commodious house, and have maintained the most exemplary discipline, and follow in all its strictness the rule of the Congregation of Paris. Few houses have been more prosperous: their actual number being forty-seven.*

Two years after the foundation of this house, the Rev. Amedeus Rappe was appointed Bishop of Cleveland, and shortly after his consecration proceeded to Europe to seek aid for his diocese. Cherishing the hope of procuring a colony of

* Letter of Mother Julia of the Assumption.

the Ursulines of Boulogne, he directed his first steps to that house, and seconded by the Superioress, Mother St. Ursula, succeeded in his desire. On the 16th of July, 1849, three choir nuns, Mother Mary of the Incarnation, Superioress, Sister St. Charles and Sister des Seraphins, accompanied by a lay sister, and a young English lady, a convert, whom the Bishop had received into the Church when chaplain of the house, bade adieu to their community and all its holy associations, and three days after embarked at Havre with Bishop Rappe. On the 8th of August they reached Cleveland, and were at once conducted to the residence which the Vicar-General, the Very Rev. Louis de Goesbriand, had prepared for their reception. On the festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin their schools were opened, and on the 15th of October the Bishop proposed three candidates for the novitiate, one of them the convert already mentioned, who, on the 28th of December, 1852, became the first professed. The number of religious and pupils has increased so rapidly, that they have already been twice compelled to enlarge the monastery. It now contains sixteen professed choir sisters, seven novices, two postulants, and nine lay sisters. They direct in Cleveland a boarding school, four day schools,

and four free schools containing about five hundred children. For much of the good which they have been enabled to do, the Ursulines ascribe the credit to the zeal and interest which the excellent Bishop and his clergy have ever shown in their welfare.

Notwithstanding many obstacles, the Ursulines of Cleveland were enabled to send a colony to Toledo in December, 1854, consisting of six religious, who thus founded the tenth Ursuline Convent in the United States, Sister des Seraphins being the Superioress. In Toledo they have charge of two day schools and two free schools, attended by a great number of children.*

Divine Providence was pleased to commence the foundation of another Ursuline Convent at St. Louis, Missouri, the seventh house of the order, through the efforts and zeal of the Very Rev. Joseph Melcher, V. G., who set out from St. Louis in 1846 for Europe. On a visit at an Ursuline Convent in Oedensburg, in Hungary, he obtained three members of that community to found a house at St. Louis, to promote the education of female youth. Animated with the spirit of their holy order, these three, Mother Magdalen Stehlin, Mother Mary Ann

* Letter of Mother Mary of the Annunciation.

Pan, and Mother Augustine Schragel, left their convent for America on the 13th of March, 1847. Compelled by circumstances to stop at several convents on their way, they did not reach St. Louis till the 5th of September, 1848. Here a small house had been procured by the exertions of their founder and director, and the community organized by electing Mother Stehlin as Superior. Their day school was opened in November, and was speedily filled.

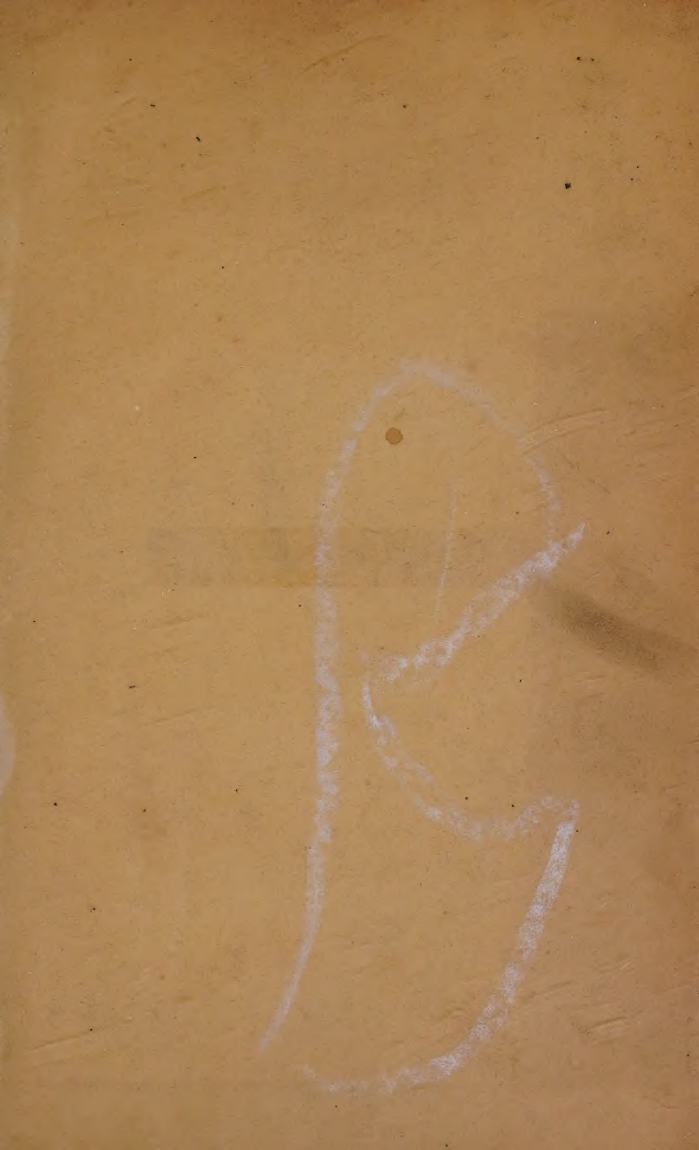
On the 25th of May, 1849, six nuns, invited by the Ursulines of St. Louis, arrived from the Convent of Landshut, in Bavaria, four being choir nuns, and two lay sisters.

In the following year a new building was erected out of the city, in a pleasant and healthy situation, and the community removed to it on the 13th of November. Their academy now contains about forty boarders, and sixty day scholars. The community under Mother Aloysia Winkler, a religious of Landshut, comprises eleven professed nuns and ten novices.

On the 16th of May, 1855, the Superior, Mother Magdalen Stehlin, repaired, with ten members of her community, to East Morrisania, near New York, and founded a new Ursuline Convent within a few miles of the spot where the Irish Ursulines offered up their prayers and good works nearly fifty years before.

The convent at Sault St. Mary's, in Upper Michigan, that still frontier post where the Jesuit missionaries planted the cross two centuries ago, was founded in 1853. On the 3d of March in that year, Mother Mary Xavier (Yvonna Le Bihon), with a little colony, left the convent of Faouet, in Brittany, to found a house of their holy order on the banks of Lake Superior. They were first installed in a small building opposite the modest Cathedral, where, in spite of their narrow accommodations, and their poverty, several young ladies of distinguished talents renounced the world to join them. They now occupy a more convenient monastery, which the Rt. Rev. Frederic Baraga, the Bishop of the See, enlarged last spring.

THE END.



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